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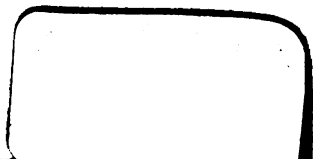
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# **INTERVENTIONS**

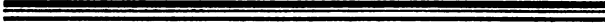


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# INTERVENTIONS

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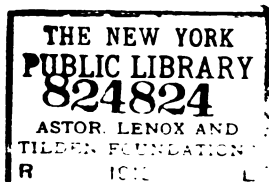
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\* Andrew J. Onderdonk 27 April 1918

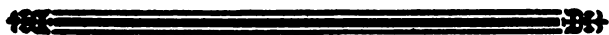




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A TEMPERED  
WIND





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## A TEMPERED WIND

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BENNY SIMMONS had spent most of the night in going up and down stairs with a broken-lipped pitcher, which, however often he took it down empty, must once more be brought up full. Even an empty two-quart pitcher is a notable burden for one of Benny's stature, but when full the process of bringing it successfully to port, up five flights of stairs, is a matter to require the closest navigation. If the ascent is hastened by impatient calls from the top, there is danger of catastrophe, complete and terrific.

When this at last happened, Benny, staying for no court of inquiry to take up the matter, fled at once, crept under a bench in a moth-eaten bit of park near by, and there remained until morning, within the black shadow cast by the electric light.

At sunrise, hunger sent him home with a sharp command, which he obeyed with some

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## *Interventions*

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hesitation, remembering how he had left the glimmering white fragments of the pitcher crying aloud for vengeance in the lower hall. Yet—even so—one must eat. With a small sigh he turned the corner of his own alleyway. Lo! a crowd, a patrol wagon, and a sudden friendly hiss in his ear:

“Run, kid! The S’iety’s after youse!”

So he ran, as his kind can run at the sound of that name of dread, turned the corner without pursuit, and was straightway face to face with the world.

What his thoughts were, or how framed to himself, it would be difficult to guess. A pariah puppy, chased with unmistakable finality from the stable of its meagre youth may reflect along the same lines, with thoughts equally inarticulate. So huge a problem probably does not lose in terror because one does not know with what words to discuss it in his own mind.

Heretofore, aside from carrying the pitcher up and down stairs, his chief occupation had been dragging a tin can about by a string. (If some skill is brought to the manipulation

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## *A Tempered Wind*

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of this contrivance, and advantage taken of all obstructions to emphasize the rhythm of the sound, the result is pleasing.) When the hydrant was blown off, he had also successfully conducted irrigation operations in the gutter. At either of these tasks he could have held his own, but neither was lucrative.

However, he was already reasonably familiar with garbage-cans, and here, at the outset, fortune favored him; for quite at the top of the first one he investigated, there lay half of a loaf of bread, perfectly good but for a crack of green mould through its middle.

Yet his problem was not to admit of such easy solution, for hardly had he grasped the bread when a tattered shadow was swept across him by the early sunlight, and the loaf was snatched by a larger hand—tremulous, bony, and soiled.

Turning about, not for argument, but because his eyes insisted on following the bread, he beheld a figure such as has been described by primitive adventurers. Once, we may believe, a company of such settled



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*Interventions*

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upon and spoiled the dinner of that other wanderer, Ulysses. Thus it was according to precedent and dramatic fitness, that on the threshold of his errantry Benny Simmons should be met by this dreary and sinister emissary from the "House of a Hundred Sorrows." So they stared at each other, the problem of how to live in the world lying between them, Benny at the beginning of it, the old woman at the conclusion of it, and neither having any advantage over the other worth mentioning, as to the understanding of it. A flicker of hesitation crossed the face of a hundred sorrows. Thrusting back into Benny's hands the small remainder of the bread, she trailed away, muttering, in search of other ash-cans.

"Half a loaf," was Benny's inarticulate comment, "is better than no bread."

He watched the old woman kindly as he ate, and hoped gratefully that she would find all sorts of good things.

Having finished breakfast, he wandered westward—his shadow leading the way, thin and blue upon the already softening asphalt.

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*A Tempered Wind*

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At Washington Square, for the first time his adventure began to please him, for here the world opened out as he had never dreamed. His shadow led him to a green bench where a gentleman of limitless leisure was reading a many-pictured paper which had become his at fourth or fifth hand.

Benny was so lost in surprise at the unexpected size of the sky in this region, and the lavish supply of trees, that for awhile he forgot graver matters. When at last he remembered them—or his stomach did—his shadow had shrunk to nothing at all, and could lead him no further, and the sun was very hot indeed—the sparrows hopping languidly about, open-billed, with wings outspread and drooping. Where the leisurely gentleman had sat remained only the paper that he had been reading, and out of this, after Benny's eyes had drowsily rested upon it for some time, an idea evolved. One might, he remembered, sell papers. Before the episode of the pitcher there had been stormy discussion of it (but all discussions were

stormy), which he had not much heeded, as a future occupation for himself.

He seized upon the windfall, carefully brushed off the dirt, smoothed the creases, held it flatly under his arm as he had seen other boys do, and went purposefully toward Sixth Avenue, where he marked such signs of traffic as argued it a good place to do business.

But, as often happens in the undertaking of a new enterprise, he was now blocked by unsuspected minutiae and ignorance of accepted forms. At first it looked well, for a fat man in a red-smeared white apron, who stood in a doorway of the market, seized his paper and gave him a penny, but hardly had he gone an arm's-length in the direction of a bakery across the street when he was swept backward by a strong fat hand upon his collar, the penny was forced from his fingers, and the paper thrust in his face violently, while overhead raged words with which he was quite familiar, but which could be applied so impartially to any situation that they carried but little explanation with them, in-

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## *A Tempered Wind*

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dicating merely that the speaker was in an unpleasant frame of mind.

Papers were papers, so far as Benny knew, and salable. It had never been brought to his notice that yesterday's paper had less value than to-day's. That something was very wrong he understood, but connected it with his own personality rather than with his stock in trade. At any rate, whether the paper in itself was right or wrong, it was his only asset, and as such he restored to it what grace he might, as soon as he was safely across the street from his angry customer. Perhaps, seen thus at a distance, his extreme smallness became more apparent, and the violent contrast between himself and the fat man appealed to that person's good-nature.

"Oh! it is excellent to have a giant's strength"—thus Benny with inarticulate eloquence, as he bent over his crumpled paper—"but it is tyrannous to use it like a giant." Or so it was that the butcher understood him.

An apple, seized from a pushcart next the curb, suddenly curved over the trolley cars

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*Interventions*

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and trucks and plumped at Benny's feet, crushing in one of its fair cheeks upon the pavement. He picked it up, not reasoning at all about cause and effect or looking to see where it came from, but he almost smiled, for it made another asset. His luncheon was now accounted for, and he still had his paper against the time for supper. Besides, he was feeling disinclined for further business at the moment. A singular giddiness was coming over him, which the fat man's shaking had increased. He went slowly back to Washington Square, eating his apple. But the butcher's round face as he settled for it with the pushcart man was abstracted and troubled, for he had children of his own.

It was now early afternoon, and there were many other children in the park—some in clean white linen, with clean bare knees and white socks; little girls with big crisp ribbons in their hair; little boys—very much Benny's seniors—with hoops and balls and other trivial non-lucrative articles. Benny thought a little about his tin can with a string, but was too warm and sleepy to spend much

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## *A Tempered Wind*

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time in useless regret. He dreamed that the old lady who had met him by the garbage-can came suddenly out from among the nurse-maids, with a quite new loaf of bread and a cracked cup from his own kitchen, which had sometimes contained milk. But always, just as he was about to take it, he had to wake up and she vanished. Once as he opened his eyes upon one of these vanishings, they met a pair of round blue ones set in a plump clean face, above which, in a fluff of yellow hair, perked a large red bow; but before he knew whether it was a real thing or a dream it was snatched away.

“Miss Kathleen! My goodness! He might have something catching.”

At last, however, the glaring afternoon grew softer, and the shadows longer. A small, cool breeze touched Benny's forehead like a child's hand, saying: “Let's go and sell the paper again, it's hungry time,” and so once more he started out upon his adventures.

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*Interventions*

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Newsboys are not allowed in the Viardot. Auguste, wild-haired, swift-footed, inter-venes, waving his napkin, shooing as one shoos a cat. Nevertheless, the entrance being shadowy, and Auguste in discussion with Madame la Propriétaire, one may reach the shining tables with stealthy swiftness, offer a paper, and return into the gray street with nothing worse than a flick on the ear from Auguste's napkin. But by that time one has smelled soup, seen ice-cream, and possibly sold a paper.

Benny Simmons, roaming uncertainly, even with a little timidity now—for it was evening and the afternoon had been filled with discouragements not set down here—saw a boy of evidently good standing in his own chosen trade, emerging swiftly from a lighted door-way. Auguste, with his pursuing napkin, was not visible from the street. Observing that the boy wore a cheerful grin and hastened up the street crying, "Here's yer evening Just-Out," with nonchalance and vigor, Benny decided to make the experiment for himself. But now, with the day's

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### *A Tempered Wind*

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failure behind him, the contrast between his own personality and that of the successful competitor he had just met lay heavily upon him. Some children would have cried at this point—perhaps some people who are not children, on reaching a similar point of an undertaking as important to them as was Benny Simmons's to him, would have felt at least a desire to cry. But the first precept laid down by Benny's philosophy had been concerning the futility of tears, so he only felt something grow heavier and heavier on his chest. There was indeed a slight gesture that you will often see exaggerated upon the stage—a small dirty hand pressed hard against his chest where the weight was. He was not now thinking much about food, but the selling of his paper had come to have importance of tremendous proportions. The idea had obsessed him, as ideas will sometimes obsess people when through great anxiety and physical distress the brain's action is rendered slightly uncertain.

Fate, which had taken charge of him that morning, and experimented with him here



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### *Interventions*

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and there, had now grown something apologetic and inquiring through repeated failures. "Things do take a turn for the better sometimes. One never can tell what will happen inside a lighted door-way any more than inside a dark one. At least it is a good smell," and so it tried him on the Viardot.

. . . . .

The terrace of the Viardot is a good place at which to dine on hot summer evenings. It fills what was once the scanty backyard of an old brownstone house, looks out from three sides upon the backyard secrets of a long block of similar houses, and is in turn looked down upon by all their windows, so that it seems to lie midway in a sort of cañon, at the western end of which the moon-face of the Jefferson Market clock blooms nightly against the sunset. There are ailantus trees all about, sweet and sickly, sprinkling untidy green flowers upon the tables.

One there escapes the pungent odor of the streets drawn up by the day's hot sun. One orders a pint of Viardot claret and a bottle of

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*A Tempered Wind*

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seltzer, making of it a beautiful iced ruby drink which shines as Auguste lights the gas. Looking in from the street you can see, through the dim length of the hall, the tables white under the gas, and the people with their neat dinners.

What it looked like to Benny Simmons it would be difficult for you and me to imagine—perhaps like such things as we, who carelessly partake every day of meals quite as attractive as this of the Viardot, shyly hope we may see shining for us after a weary and thirsty day, and after passing through something like this shadowed hallway which Benny now entered slowly, his face very white and sad under its unspeakable grime. Effectively, this was no place for him, any more than that other place will be for you or me.

At a table that commanded a good view of the entrance there sat a lady alone, the chair opposite her tipped forward in a dejected attitude, its wooden forehead resting on the cloth as if in prayer.

Now and then the lady looked toward the door. She had rather remarkable eyes—soft

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*Interventions*

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and black and troubled. She drew laborious patterns on the cloth with her fork and gathered up the littered ailantus flowers in neat windrows with accuracy and an apparent attention to what she did that made it seem an important occupation; but the ailantus blossoms might have stood for a multitude of worries, and the patterns on the cloth for distracted plans that must fit distracted circumstances. The hands were only trying their best to assist an anxious brain that was unconscious of them.

As she turned one of her frequent glances upon the door, she met the eyes of Benny Simmons, and in spite, perhaps because, of her own distress, she understood that here was one come to present a claim against the world in general. Some people there are who hold themselves liable for the world's debts, when claims of this nature are presented. She did not smile at Benny Simmons as one smiles at a child; rather it was a look of grave interest.

Benny came forward at once, furtive and small, so that the tables hid him until he had

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## *A Tempered Wind*

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almost reached her with his yesterday's paper, when Auguste bore down with his napkin, which caught Benny full on the ear. As he fled, the lady half rose and spoke to Auguste, who did not hear because he was laughing at Benny. Then she shut her lips in a thin line and sat down, paler than before, to her occupation with the figures upon the cloth. If one is very unfortunate indeed, there are many little luxuries that one must learn to do without—such as paying a nickel for a dirty yesterday's paper, when offered by the littlest and weariest newsboy in all New York.

If one has dined on many pleasant evenings at the Viardot, there come to be associations with the languid and untidy ailantus trees, and with the solemn yellow face of the clock, and with the crude flavor of the Viardot claret, for of such materials are formed the habits of association that strike root into a place and claim it—for lack of a better place—as home.

And so, supposing one to have met with misfortune—so that one may no longer dine

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### *Interventions*

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as one wills among all the restaurants of New York, but must choose the cheaper ones, among which the Viardot is the aristocrat—and supposing the misfortune now to be darkening down with breathless swiftness, so that the Viardot also is about to be snatched away and set among the other unattainable things, why then the last dinner eaten there among the ailantus trees, facing the sunset, may be fraught with tragic sentiment and concentrated realization of one's position.

. . . . .

When Leighton came at last, tired and absent-minded, to take possession of the chair that his wife had been keeping for him, she at once perceived that no hopeful event had brought relief to his drawn face, yet she could not keep from asking: "No news—of any kind?"

He shook his head, then looked around at the cheap furnishings of the Viardot with angry wistfulness.

"We've got to cut this out, I suppose."

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*A Tempered Wind*

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"We can try light housekeeping, or board."

He hastily drank a glassful of claret. "A boarding-house"—he shivered, for he was by nature a lover of the flesh-pots of Egypt.

"I shan't mind," she ventured gently.

"Won't you? I shall mind for you, then. I didn't marry you for this sort of life."

"For any sort, wasn't it? . . . Do you know, within the last half-hour, I was wondering whether after all we didn't still belong to the lucky class who have no business to growl at things. People who are really unlucky put us to shame. . . . There was a newsboy here—I—" Her voice trailed off sadly.

"Another lost yellow dog that you wanted to waste your substance on? Poor Eunice! We'll have to cut out charity too, I'm afraid. People who are badly in debt can't give away things, you know. Other people's nickels can't be given to newsboys, you know."

"I know—I didn't give it. I wish I had, though."

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*Interventions*

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Leighton's eyes had wandered to the doorway. He set down his crimson glass suddenly.

"Well, I'll be— Here, boy."

For in spite of Auguste, Benny's feet had strayed back to that shining door. He was not conscious of guiding them, only they were stubborn about going further, and kept creeping back—a course evidently justified, as matters were turning out.

But as he came forward to complete the transaction, he saw, just level with his eye, a platter of meat, with bread near it and vegetables. He forgot the money, the paper slipped from under his elbow, he gripped the table edge with his tiny gray finger-tips, and stared. Things wavered and grew black—all but the food. That seemed to swell and sparkle—to give out rainbow colors, while the odor of it went through him in waves. Then that faded also.

When the world came back, he was lying in a curiously soft and pleasant place, and the unaccustomed feeling of water was upon his face. He swallowed something—another

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### *A Tempered Wind*

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spoonful—then with an eager whimper grabbed for the cup.

“Steady, old man.”

What a crowd of faces! Auguste, who did not seem at all inclined to wave his napkin, Madame la Propriétaire, and many others at the back, while a gray-haired gentleman fed him soup in doses of one teaspoonful at a time and talked in large words to the other people—in small ones, now and then, to Benny.

Looking up, Benny discovered the Lady’s face above him and understood that the pleasant soft place wherein he lay was the Lady’s lap.

Then somewhere out of the crowd came that dreadful word, the “Society.”

At that he struggled faintly to be up and off once more; but meeting her hand, cool and soft and reassuring, he forgot his purpose and merely shut his five fingers decisively about one of hers, while with the other hand he strove to hasten the soup to his mouth.

“Good business instinct,” said Leighton sarcastically. “He knows when he’s got hold of a good thing.”



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### *Interventions*

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Indeed, it was odd what strength and determination Benny put into that grasp.

She tried once, very gently, to release her white finger—for Benny's hands were really dreadful—but had not the heart to try quite hard enough, particularly when he turned and looked her in the eyes determinedly.

Almost it was a menace. "You don't dare pull it away!"

Then, having had as much soup as the doctor said was good for him, he grew drowsy—very drowsy, indeed. They might have sent him to the Society, or anywhere else, and he would have made no objection. He released the Lady's hand and lay altogether limp, while some of the people went back to their dinners, and the others stood around and gave advice. One man offered to get a policeman.

"I think," said the lady quietly, "we will manage some other way just for the present. He doesn't look as if—anybody would miss him very much if we took him home for a bath and a good night's sleep."

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## *A Tempered Wind*

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The physician chuckled. "I wish you joy of him, madam," he said, going back to his dinner, and that, with an undertone of relief in their polite sarcasm, was the attitude in general of the other people.

Leighton considered his wife with alarm and some amusement. There was that in her Madonna attitude, her downward look upon the weary atom in her lap, which answered with the primeval logic of all Madonnas any argument which he might advance on the score of common sense, even before he spoke.

"We can't afford," he stammered, "we have no right——"

"He's so little!"

"But—what would my creditors say?"

"I know—but how big and strong we are!"

Yet Leighton, having beaten his brains out all day against a brazen wall of impossibilities, had come to regard himself as a straw in the wind, altogether without strength or purpose.

"Are we?" he muttered.

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### *Interventions*

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She looked up at him in a vague, startled way, saying swiftly:

"Do you realize that *he* would have been about as old as this if he had lived? If he had lived, we—we should have taken care of him somehow."

This evidently, to her, stood for an unanswerable argument, and she gathered the child toward her with an air of finality. Leighton made a brief stand with some troubled remark about heredity, but she countered swiftly with a confident one about the power of environment to counteract heredity, and he knew that the thing was settled.

They sat over their coffee until the other diners were gone, and Auguste had lowered all the lights but the one over their table. The ailantus trees gave forth the quiet drone of insects; the sombre, impersonal mutter of the city was like the sound of surf: Benny, a wisp of wreckage of undetermined value cast up by that careless tide. . . . Yet there is debate upon that point; some contending, with a show of reason, that the carelessness

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## *A Tempered Wind*

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is superficial, merely, and a small matter; that care and purpose are the substance of the foundation of things.

. . . . .

Leighton brought his chair around to such a position that he could obtain an uninterrupted view of this new factor in his already difficult problem.

"He *is* rather small," he conceded, gingerly touching the inert hand. When it responded to his touch, closing quickly upon his finger, he found himself as powerless in its clasp as his wife had been, and let his hand remain, growing more and more amazed at the contrast between it and the one which held it. His was such a big, muscular, clean hand—capable of all sorts of effort—of wielding a sledge-hammer, if need were, for all its softness. What right had a man with hands like that to be discouraged, so long as such small and weak ones as this of Benny's were in need of help?

From this he began once more to grope at that brazen wall of impossibility upon whose

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*Interventions*

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smooth surface he had been bruising his fists these weeks and months. His eyes falling upon Benny's paper found in it an emblem of pluck. One might suppose that anybody, by overhauling his assets, could find something equivalent to a yesterday's muddy paper as a starting-point. . . . Perhaps, instead of scaling the wall, or breaking through it, one might burrow under, or go round about . . . he found himself shaping a scheme.

"Well," he said slowly, "I dare say something will turn up."

He lifted Benny out of his wife's lap and stood up. His face was less harassed. He smiled reassuringly at her over his grimy burden.

"Everything will come out all right," he said quietly, as one who knows.

The child roused, trembled, and clung to his coat like a frightened kitten.

"All right, old man, you've struck oil," Leighton informed him kindly.

Benny looked at him and Eunice searchingly, appearing to turn everything over

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*A Tempered Wind*

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carefully in his mind. Having reached a satisfactory conclusion, he smiled faintly, yawned, and trustfully relaxed once more into sleep.



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THE RUBBER  
STAMP

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## THE RUBBER STAMP

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"I SEE," said the nurse, "Martha has the Nancy Dancy books. Did you know I helped to make them? You wouldn't suspect *me* of having a hand in anything literary or artistic, now, would you?"

Miss Waite's business concerned only the children of other women, but her face was that of the mother of many. My son was in her cushiony arms at the moment going to sleep over his five-ounce bottle. She pinched his inert hand, whereupon he spread his fingers, increased the slit between his eyelids by a hair's-breadth, and resumed work with a tiny sigh.

"Just fancy!" said the nurse. "*Me* having anything to do with a book."

She said book with the reverent capitalization bestowed on literature by those who have never tried it.

"They certainly are having a great suc-

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### *Interventions*

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cess," I said. "It's so hard to get satisfactory children's books nowadays. Everything is always eating up something else. The artists seem to love to do dragons and snakes. I suppose because they have nice lines and lend themselves to cheap color processes."

"Dear me," said the nurse, "I don't know anything about that. A picture is a picture to me, though you'd think I might have learned a little being with Mrs. Sterret a whole year."

"Were you really?" said I. "Do tell me what she is like. One hears so many queer things about famous people. Is she really such a sloven? And is it true that she turns her children over to trained nurses and hardly sees them from one year's end to another?"

Miss Waite made a ferocious little sound in her throat: "Who says that?"

"Oh," I said vaguely, "newspapers—everybody."

My son was asleep invincibly. She spanked him scientifically and tickled his neck, but he had sunk beyond reach so she kissed the

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### *The Rubber Stamp*

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top of his head resoundingly, avoiding the fontanelle, and cuddled him to her starched white bosom.

"There's no doctor or head nurse looking," she muttered guiltily. "Oh, how I *do* wish you belonged to me," and she brazenly rocked him with her cheek against the warm fuzz of his head.

"As to turning her babies over to nurses," said she scornfully, "there was never but one nurse, to my knowledge, and I was the one. As to being a sloven, anybody who could do what she did and think about looks——

"When I first saw her I did think she was a crank. She was so thin and sick-looking, and carelessly dressed. And her eyes had a wild look that made me suspicious. She was slovenly if you like, then. The last time I saw her she might have stepped out of a show-window on Fifth Avenue. Her little boy was two months old when I came to her. 'I'm so afraid of making mistakes in preparing the bottle,' said she. 'I am—a—very busy woman, and my husband is not well.'

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*Interventions*

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"We nurses are so used to finding trouble—wickedness too—where you'd least expect it that we take a skeleton in the closet as a matter of course. We know perfectly well that something unpleasant—even horrible—besides the case that brings us there, is always walking around the rooms of every house or flat where a family lives. Some ghost or goblin is sure to grin at us through a crack before we've been in a house twenty-four hours."

"There isn't one here," I said indignantly. Miss Waite said nothing.

I thought a moment and was silent. Miss Waite continued:

"Sometimes it's rat size—sometimes only mouse. But I've seen—well—wolves and tigers. I shouldn't have said what I did if yours had been bigger than a mouse. We get so we pay no more attention to 'em than to the family cat; do our business and go as soon as possible.

"To tell the honest truth, I thought at first she was a 'nervous case.' That's a polite word for almost or quite insane, you

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### *The Rubber Stamp*

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know. Still, she had been preparing the baby's food for a month all herself and doing it in a way I had to live up to: boric acid for the nipples, bottle brushes, cream dipper, barley-water, milk-sugar, lime-water—everything as exact and clean as a surgeon's tools. And *that* didn't seem like a 'nervous case.'

"I could feel her great black eyes boring through the back of my head when she showed me into this baby's pantry of hers.

"'You see,' said she in a kind of apologetic way, 'I can't intrust this sort of thing to untrained hands. I asked my second girl to put the modified milk into the baby's refrigerator, supposing she would do it at once—and found it standing beside the hot kitchen stove two hours afterward. One has to do those things one's self,' said she, 'or trust them to some one who knows how.' Then, suddenly, as I was beginning to brush the bottles, she ran out of the room, and I heard her trying not to cry. A nurse is hardened—at least accustomed—to people's crying, but this—I knew that it was because

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*Interventions*

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of something, because of the Thing I was speaking of that was in the house, and I knew that it must be a big one—tiger-size, or worse.

“Not wickedness. When it’s wickedness you know it because you begin to feel wicked and cynical yourself. This was big and cold and heavy, like sewer-gas, or like—Did you ever see a picture of a snake twined about a branch and looking down into a bird’s nest?

“‘It’s fear,’ I said.

“And as I set my feedings away, noticing again how beautifully spick-and-span she had kept everything, I found I was horribly sorry. And that made me cross, for a nurse can’t afford to have sympathies. This, I suppose, confused me, so that when I went to have a look at my new baby and take him his bottle I accidentally opened the wrong door. I had never seen a studio before. The light was rather dim so that I didn’t see then, what was so plain afterward, that everything was just shadow—hardly more than begun. It looked as if the room were full of children,

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### *The Rubber Stamp*

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all laughing—and fairies—well, you know those fairies in the Nancy Dancy books. But of course the drawings were all ever so much bigger than they show in the books, and mostly in color. They were dear! How could Fear be in the same house with that crowd of laughing babies? Still I heard her sobbing somewhere, and then—but it seemed as if it was all those laughing babies that made me do it—I began to cry myself. I stepped out softly and tried the next door, and there was my baby right enough, bless his heart, with his finger half-way down his throat and his eyes wide open, looking for his bottle. I took away his finger and tucked in the nipple instead, and he swallowed away like a little man, staring hard at my cap.

“It was evening when I came, so my first meal there was breakfast. As I went down I saw a maid taking a tray to the studio door—just coffee. But the coffee they had at that house! It wasn’t a beverage; it was a drug. I had to fill my cup two-thirds full of milk and then it was strong. But she took a whole breakfast-cup full—black!



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## *Interventions*

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"As the door opened she saw me and asked how the baby had slept. You'd have thought from her face that he was desperately ill.

"'Why,' said I, 'he's the wellest, fattest, dearest little thing that ever was! *You're* the patient,' I said. 'Does your doctor know what kind of breakfast you have?' And I pointed to the coffee.

"'That isn't breakfast,' said she. 'I had my breakfast two hours ago, when Anne woke up.' Anne was her little girl. 'This is just to help me about working.' She waved her hand toward the pictures, and now I saw plainly how they were really just ghosts of pictures—all cloudy masses of paint. Yet the night before they had seemed all but alive.

"'I have to get past this stage, you see,' she said to me, just as if I knew about such things, 'and it takes whip and spur to do it. Once past the hill and the rough road, we'll get back to a more normal way of living.'

"She was drinking that terrible coffee while she talked, and by the time it was half

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### *The Rubber Stamp*

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gone the color had come into her face and her eyes were bright. I could hardly believe she was the woman I had heard crying the night before.

“‘I may as well tell you,’ said she, ‘what I am trying to do. You know my husband is an invalid. Our physician says change of climate might make him well, but we can’t afford that at present. And aside from that our affairs are in a bad way—very bad. We’ve had losses’—she turned white as she mentioned that. I saw it was no small matter—‘so that I thought it might be well if I took my talent out of its napkin. We are very ambitious for our children’—she spoke with an odd sort of defiance as though expecting criticism—‘and that sort of ambition is as expensive as one can make it. So I thought I could serve them better this way than by being with them all the time. But I had very little training. So I am going to school to myself. Some of the most successful artists have been self-taught,’ said she. ‘It’s very hard to give my children over to others to care for. Still, when I remember

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### *Interventions*

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the mothers that leave theirs in a crèche, while they go out to scrub'—she gulped down the rest of her coffee and stood up very straight and bright-eyed. 'You see,' said she, 'I've got to do *good* work. There is poor work that pays well, I understand, but I don't know how to do it. And it takes so long to learn; and—we are in such a hurry to go South. But you will help me—' She stopped being dignified and put her hands on my shoulders and looked up into my face—she is a little thing.

"'You *will* stand by, won't you?' said she. And in spite of her courageous air I saw in her eyes the Fear that had been weeping around the house the night before, the fear of the bird on her nest when she sees the snake.

"So I patted her and said of course I'd 'stand by,' only she mustn't worry and mustn't take her coffee so strong. She held on to me for a long time, but was so still I didn't know she had been crying until I found the starch out of my bib where her face had been.

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### *The Rubber Stamp*

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“‘I don’t believe I’ll mind *your* having him,’ she said at last, giving me a little push out of the room. And I heard a funny scratchy noise like something in a terrible hurry. (I learned afterward she was sharpening her charcoal on sand-paper.) Then walking back and forth; a steady tramp for hours, for she never sat down at her work. There wasn’t any model. She said she wouldn’t let her little girl pose for her anyway, and that even if she did it would spoil everything because the child would become self-conscious and stiff.

“‘I have taught my eye to remember,’ she said, and she was always doing little studies of their heads while she was with them. It was the drawing of an eyelid, she told me, or the curve of a cheek or the squaring of the mouth corners when they laughed that she sketched then. ‘I do that when another woman would be sewing. Of course I couldn’t depend on that if I were a painter, but it’s enough for the simple sort of drawings I’m making. And then I use my camera some, but really you can’t get much

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*Interventions*

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out of a photograph; it's one way of sketching and sometimes you get an idea, but generally they're all wrong. I didn't know that when I started out. I thought my photographs were lovely and that all I should have to do would be to copy them line for line. But when I began to work from them they seemed to crumble into dust.'

"That's the way she put it. I didn't understand then, and I don't now. She had some of the loveliest photographs of her babies that I've ever seen. But they didn't suit her.

"Her camera was a wonderful little thing and I believe very expensive. She could take snaps in-doors if it was moderately light, and she was always gunning after little Anne's smiles, which were rarer than they might have been, for the child was fretting over her last molars and running a temperature and crying at night. It was better after I got her to come to me—but it took a long time. Queer child. Not everybody liked her. 'It's for my rubber stamp,' Mrs. Sterret explained to me one day after shooting off a dozen ex-

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### *The Rubber Stamp*

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posures at Anne. I noticed she always faced her camera toward the sun, and thought it odd because the directions tell you not to do that. 'It's prettiest,' said she, 'when they are almost in silhouette with the sun on their hair and drawing a line of light around their profiles. You get an effect of sun that way that you can't in any other.'

"I asked her what she meant by 'Rubber Stamp.'

"'The rubber-stamp artist,' said she, 'is the one that makes the most money. You do a certain kind of picture—one subject done in one way, all the time—enough different so you can tell them apart, that's all. This is the greatest of the rubber-stamp artists,' said she, pulling out a portfolio. She spread out a lot of magazine covers. 'You could almost superimpose one profile on another. All that's different is the hats; the girls all droop their eyelids and part their lips and hold their chins in the air. I'm told he gets three hundred dollars for each of them.'

"It didn't seem possible they could be worth that, but I did think them pretty and

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### *Interventions*

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to be honest I had to say so, though I could see she didn't.

“‘Of course you do’ said she, ‘Everybody thinks so except artists. That’s the Rubber Stamp. Now, here’s another portfolio. It’s hardly fair to call it rubber-stamp work; at least it’s a much better one than the other, and I’ve learned ever so much from her. Children, you see; and they *are* children. *She* knows how to keep things simple. She uses a clean strong line, and you’d never mistake her work for anybody’s else. That’s where the stamp comes. But her children are always solemn and quiet. Mine are to be always in sunshine and always laughing and wriggling. That’s *my* rubber stamp—that—and—keeping them in flat light grays—not much line.’

“Well, it seemed to me she was getting it; only—it was always one new drawing after another. At first glance you’d think, ‘How perfectly lovely!’—then there’d seem to be nothing there. Just nothing at all.

“‘I’m not ready yet to finish,’ she said once, reading my look, I suppose. ‘It’s the

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### *The Rubber Stamp*

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hardest part I'm doing now—composition and tone, making maps of the masses of light and shade as we used to do maps of the States at school. Finishing won't be hard once I'm ready.'

"But I couldn't help being uneasy; perhaps because I saw she was uneasy herself. What if the finishing might not be so easy, after all? But then, what did I know? I took the children out and kept them away all day as much as I could, and took them both at night. She had been taking Anne at night, molars and all. I don't know when she had slept. And the baby only two months old! Think of it! No wonder she couldn't nurse him.

"Mr. Sterret? I had to change my opinion of him before I was done. At first I put him down for a hypochondriac. I supposed he was dying. But some people show up best then—and some don't; depending partly on what the case is, but not altogether. I met him several times in the halls and he bowed and spoke pleasantly, but kept a handkerchief smelling of carbolic to his face. He had



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### *Interventions*

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a room at the top of the house and took his air on the roof and isolated himself with all sorts of necessary and unnecessary precautions. I wanted to do something for him, too, but he seemed to be afraid that I'd somehow carry tuberculosis from him to the children if I did; so when I saw it worried him I kept away. He was almost frantic on the subject and martyrized himself almost as much as that poor leper they made such a fuss about.

"But I finally persuaded him it was perfectly safe to bring the baby up to the roof for its airing when he was there, and it did him a world of good. And I told him of all the T'b's I had known who got perfectly well and how autopsies almost always show scars on the lungs, so that he brightened up to be almost human after a few days. He had a little insurance, it seemed, so wasn't so worried about his dying as Mrs. Sterret was. She preferred him alive.

"One day I met Mr. Sterret's physician coming down. He was a personal friend, too, and knew how their affairs stood. He

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### *The Rubber Stamp*

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called me into an empty room and shut the door.

“‘Does she still keep up that artistic insanity?’ he said, speaking in the angry way that one will use when anxious about a friend.

“‘She works constantly in her studio,’ I said. He struck his fist into his open palm and went to the window, glaring out, as though some pet case were going against him. ‘How does she eat and sleep?’ he asked, without turning around. I told him.

“‘Don’t you think that you, as a woman, might bring Mrs. Sterret to her senses and show her that she is throwing away her husband’s life and her children’s bread and butter by this madness? That a woman should think of a career under *such* circumstances!’ he said.

“‘Oh,’ I said, ‘it’s *not* that. Oh, how can you think so? She knows the money is going and she hopes to earn enough by her drawings to support them all and to go South before it is too late for her husband.’

“‘There was enough,’ said the physician,

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## *Interventions*

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‘when she began. Why, she must have spent five hundred on her camera alone in the past year; and now she’s got *you*. There’s no money in art or writing except at the top. I know a lot of those people and they all say so. And she has had hardly any training—as training counts nowadays. What does her work look like anyway?’

“‘Oh,’ I said, ‘it’s lovely! She only needs time to finish——’

“He laughed angrily. ‘Other things will be finished first,’ said he. ‘Her husband’s life and every cent they have. I think,’ said he, ‘I’ll have to talk with Mrs. Sterret.’

“‘Oh, don’t,’ I said. ‘Don’t discourage her. I do think she is going to come out all right.’

“But he looked at me as doctors look at a nurse who has said too much, and next minute he was knocking at her studio door.

“I was so angry with him though I could see he thought everything of them both! The baby was fretting and I walked with him to keep him quiet. It was an hour before the doctor came out. He was looking as

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*The Rubber Stamp*

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miserable as if he'd lost a patient. He started to pass me without speaking, then reconsidered.

“‘She needs a woman to be good to her, I guess,’ said he. ‘But you can’t see your friends go over Niagara without a word; at least I can’t.’

“‘You don’t need to push them further into the current, though,’ I snapped. He wasn’t offended in the least.

“‘No,’ said he. ‘That would be a terrible pity.’

“‘He gave me some valerian for her and said to try to get her coffee away. Then he took a look at the babies and brightened up a bit. I saw he liked the way I was caring for them.

“‘As soon as the baby was quiet I ran up to Mrs. Sterret, but she answered that she was working and would have her dinner on a tray.

“‘I dare say I shall work late,’ she said. ‘I really must finish something to-night. Then I can send it off to-morrow and we shall see.’ She smiled and looked as bright

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*Interventions*

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as a button, but her hand was a lump of ice and her cheeks had two red spots.

“‘He means well. He’s our best friend. And it may be he is right. I’m going to try to prove him wrong to-night. Nobody would be better pleased than he if I proved him wrong.’ That was the way she took it.

“I couldn’t sleep that night. The baby was restless. I didn’t undress. I took off my cap and dozed a little on the couch, but I felt as if I were alone on night duty in the hospital, only worse, because there you *can* get help, and there you have only sick people to think about. And in sickness there are things you can do; it’s tangible—but this—well, it was the Beast that I had felt that first night. I drew the curtains tight for the Thing was so real that I half expected to see a snake face glaring through the black glass. And about once an hour I went and listened outside Mrs. Sterret’s studio door. I could hear her stepping back and forth and her charcoal scratching. Now and then she hummed a little tune. But I was terribly anxious for I knew what the strain had been,

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### *The Rubber Stamp*

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and I had seen nurses collapse and be good for nothing ever afterward. You *can't*, you know——

“Finally—when the windows were turning gray I heard her give a little cry as if she were hurt, and then——

“‘After all!’ said she. ‘After all!’

“Then I went in. I thought it was time.

“The pictures seemed to have faded and dulled overnight like fire gone to ashes. Some she had rubbed out, some were twisted and distorted. All deformed, ugly, dead, spoiled. I had felt for a week that she was not getting on with them, but she had held her own until the doctor came and talked to her, and now——

“She had put out her light and was standing by the window looking out.

“‘See the morning,’ said she. ‘It is like iron—rigid and gray and cold—and over there a little flame of red. I can imagine a great battle beginning on a morning like this. Don’t you see the tents over there—’ It was a ragged line of clouds. ‘Mars and Venus and Juno and Athena camping above the

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*Interventions*

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field of Troy.' She stood among her unfinished canvases, in her trailing wrapper, with her hair all wild, both hands against her head. 'And I don't believe any of the great generals fought and thought and suffered more than I—an ignorant and incompetent woman—trying to overcome my ignorance and incompetence so that I can save my babies. . . . I should not have been ignorant and incompetent. No woman has any business to bring children into the world unless she is able to protect them against such a chance as this. . . .'

"'You go to bed,' said I.

"'To bed?' said she. 'Why, Troy is burning—tall Troy town—and you tell me to go to bed! We must take the sick and the children and go. Æneas escaped with Anchises—we will escape, somehow. . . . Troy is burning,' she said again.

"I sat down and cried. Then I remembered I had left the baby's bottle heating and ran back to get it. It was too hot so I had to make another. While I was doing that she came and stood behind me. I didn't

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### *The Rubber Stamp*

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dare turn around with my eyes all red like that.

“‘Auntie,’ said she, ‘I’m—not—feeling well,’—and I turned just in time to catch her as she fell. She was little anyway, and so thin that I carried her to her bed like a child. But I wasn’t going to send for a doctor—not just yet. She opened her eyes after a minute and I got her warm and comfortable. She was terribly sub-normal; weak and dull and all played out.

“‘I’ve failed, Auntie,’ said she. ‘I can’t do it, after all. It was foolish to try, as Doctor Kean said, but I loved them so, and I was sure love would teach me. I ought to have tried keeping boarders at the start. Now I’ve used up all the strength and money that I might have used to succeed at that. Now Will can’t go South, and so he will die—perhaps I’ll die, too. Mothers do—I thought I couldn’t. I was very vainglorious. I thought I loved them too much to die. But now—it’s got inside me—as forts are taken. . . . I’ll try . . . but—’

“And then I seemed to see the whole



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### *Interventions*

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thing. 'You *haven't* failed,' I shouted. 'You're all in, but you've really won. It's all in your head and fingers now, just as my training is. All you need is to sleep and eat and rest for twenty-four hours, and you'll see—you'll see! You're not even sick,' I said.

"But I thought I was lying.

"'Auntie,' said she, 'after paying our debts we sha'n't have one penny in the world after the first of the month. I've thrown it all away—all—but I thought I was going to—save us all,' said she. 'But we're going over the falls—Niagara—the babies——'

"'You sleep,' I said. 'Falls—no such thing. *Your* sort don't go over Niagara.'

"I gave her an hypodermic and left her, for the baby was howling blue murder and little Anne was fretting. She was asleep when I looked in next. She slept for twelve hours. Then I heard her get up and go into the studio.

"I knew better than to go near her then. I—well I prayed a little, and vowed I'd

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## *The Rubber Stamp*

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drug those babies silly if they dared raise a row before she came out.

“I’ve seen relatives waiting while an operation was going on, and they made me very impatient. It seemed so silly, when they couldn’t do anything and all modern science was at work for them, to stand around in the reception-room and try to imagine what was going on—perhaps half a block away. Though as to that I don’t know but it makes you still crosser when there aren’t any relatives to be anxious, or when those that do exist don’t care or are thinking about money—(there’s a funny look to the eye that always gives ’em away when they’re thinking that, always).

“But my business has been on the inside of the closed door, you see, where I didn’t have to wonder and where the patient didn’t belong to me. Now I felt that Mrs. Sterret *did* belong to me. People do when they’ve cried on you—and I was shut out and couldn’t help a bit, at least on *her* side of the door. There she was, with tools as mysterious to me as a surgeon’s knives would be

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### *Interventions*

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to her, concerned in something as important as a major operation, with nothing but a little stick of charcoal and some paper between her and the Beast. Think of working at babies' smiles on paper in such a mood as that! Trying to scare away the snake with a picture of a child's laugh!

"I suppose I passed her door fifty times that night, if once, and I haven't scorned the relatives since.

"At about four o'clock I heard her stirring and smelt coffee. Then a great scratching of charcoal until sunrise. Just as the sun came up I heard the fixatif going on, and that made me hope, for it meant that something was finished. After that came the rattle of paper as though she were pinning more sheets to her board, and this time she sang under her breath as she worked. Still, I'd known her to do that when things were going against her most.

"By that time I had to give baby his breakfast bottle and I scurried to keep him from talking too loud about it. Then little Anne began *her* day. I had the second girl

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### *The Rubber Stamp*

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take her out as soon as she had had her 'gubbum,' which was the word she had invented for breakfast, and then I devoted myself to guarding the studio door and keeping baby quiet. When he took his morning nap I fell asleep myself on a couch that stood in the hall. It was about noon when I awoke, feeling as one does when it is time for a patient's medicine. She was standing beside me dressed for the street.

"'I've just had my luncheon,' she announced calmly, 'and I'm going to take my pictures into town. I dare say I shall be back by four,' and out she went.

"*That*, if you please, after such a night—such a series of nights as she—and I—had spent. She would have had me fooled—I should have thought her as calm as she looked but for one thing. She didn't look at the children or speak of them, though the baby woke up just then with a delicious coo. That showed she couldn't trust herself. I looked out of the window to see that she was really gone, and saw her with the big portfolio standing on the corner waiting for

the car. She looked as matter-of-fact and prosperous and well-dressed as if she were going out for a *matinée*. She *could* dress when she chose.

"Then I sneaked into the studio and the first thing I saw was this"—Miss Waite opened the Nancy Dancy book to the figure of a little girl squealing with laughter.

"It was a study she had made for this, I mean. The finished one had gone to town with her. It was on the easel, put there for me to see—to tell me what she couldn't trust herself to talk about. It was life-size—just the face. It was all that the unfinished things had promised. Even I could see that it had been done with as little effort as you or I would write a page of a letter. A few flat tones—sunlight behind the head outlining the dear fluffy hair; a few strong lines that were soft and delicate too; everything about it just right—and under it what do you think she had written? 'The Rubber Stamp.' I have it now in my room at the club where I can see it whenever I wake up. It does put the heart in one so.

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### *The Rubber Stamp*

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“You have the rest of the story in these little books, and you knew before I began that she succeeded. Hardly a magazine comes out now without a drawing of hers in it, and they have a perfectly lovely house in South Carolina for winters and a New England farm for summers, and Mr. Sterret is as brown and strong as any other farmer, even though one lung has to do the work of two. Little Anne rides a pony like a circus performer, with her daddy around the farm overseeing, and the boy was scolding to be allowed to have a horse too when I was there last, and they were wondering whether his legs were long enough; by this time he has one, no doubt.

“And that’s all I know about women who have what newspapers call ‘careers.’ She fought herself nearly dead for her husband and babies—and won. She says that the babies did it because she learned all she knew from them. And that is partly true.

“Oh, did I tell you how she acted when she came back with the first big check in

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### *Interventions*

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her pocket? I saw her coming but I did not meet her for fear I should cry, whatever the news was, and if it should be bad I'd want all the nerve I had, so I went up to the nursery with the children and got the baby to goo-ing and Anne to romping, and let Mrs. Sterret come to find me. I didn't turn around at first when I knew she stood in the door, but Anne rushed and caught her around the knees. 'Oh, Mother, how pretty you are!' said she.

"Then I turned. I had expected her to collapse, victory or defeat—after that strain. Collapse! She looked six inches taller and ten years younger. Younger? No—young people don't look like that. It was the expression you see in those big strong men who do things.

"'Auntie dear,' said she, 'can you get the babies and Daddy ready to go South to-morrow? I shall have to stay here for a fortnight longer to fill an order.'

"Then the iron look in her face melted and she threw up her arms laughing. 'Now I'll tell Will,' said she, and rushed upstairs

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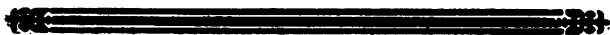
*The Rubber Stamp*

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like a child. 'Will! Will!' I heard her calling all the way—then the door shut on them and I was too busy with the babies to think of anything else."







# BROKEN GLASS





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## BROKEN GLASS

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"I CAN'T stay but a minute," said Mrs. Waring, spreading her long hands above the wood blaze. "I was taking my evening constitutional over the moors. *Did* you see the sunset? And the firelight dancing in your open windows was so dear and sweet and homy I had to come. Babies in bed?"

"Oh yes. Such perfectly good six-o'clock babies! I can tuck them up myself and still have time to dress safe from sticky fingers. Delia is such a blessing. So big and soft and without any nerves, and really and truly fond of them. When she leaves me for a day I am perfectly wild and lost."

"What is the matter with us women," said Mrs. Waring frowningly, "that we can't take care of our own children and run our own houses, to say nothing of spinning and weaving as our grandmothers did? My grandmother was a Western pioneer and

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### *Interventions*

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brought up six without help, and—buried three. Think of it! To *lose* a child—” A strong shudder went through her delicate body. “How can a woman live after that? We can gasp through the bearing—you and I know that—but to lose—” She covered her face with her ringed hands.

“But, my dear,” said the sleek woman by the fire, “your babies are such little Samsons! That nightmare ought not to bother you now.”

“No. It oughtn’t. That it does so only shows the more our modern unfitness.”

“I suppose our grandmothers must have been more of the Delia type.”

“And yet we think the Delia type inferior. It’s solid and quiet and stupid—not always honest, but it succeeds with children. You and I are reckoned among the cultured. We read—in three languages—and write magazine verse. Your nocturne is to be given in concert next week—yet I think that Delia and her type rather despise us because we are wrecks after spending an afternoon trying to keep a creeping baby from choking

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*Broken Glass*

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and bumping and burning and taking cold, or reading Peter Rabbit the fiftieth time to Miss Going-on-Three."

"The question is," said Mrs. Waring, coiling bonelessly in the Morris chair, "what will our children be? You and I may be inferior, but," she caught her lower lip in her teeth, "my babies came to me after I was thirty, and I know their value, as your Delia type or your grandmother type doesn't for all her motherliness. When women are mothers in the early twenties they don't know. They can't. My music filled in those years. Filled them! It served to express the despair of a barren woman—that was all. Since they came fools have condoled with me because I have had to give up my 'career' for their sake. Career!" She threw back her head and stood up with her hands in her coat pocket. "Here," her voice grew gentle and humorous as she took out the tatters of a little book gay with red and green, "give me some paste. I promised to mend it. She has read it to pieces at last. I thought I could rhyme about sunsets and

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*Interventions*

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love and death, but nobody ever loved my  
rhymes as she loves this. Let's write some  
children's verses, you and me——

“ ‘Goldilocks was naughty, she began to sulk  
and pout,  
She threw aside her playthings——’

That's the way, you see, not——

“ ‘When from the sessions of sweet silent thought.’ ”

She seated herself at the big flat-topped  
desk as she spoke and began to paste and  
mend.

“I've written one,” said Mrs. Blake, “or  
Tommy has. We were sitting up with his  
first double tooth. We had taken a go-cart  
ride in the early moonlight and I was  
taking cows as an example of people who  
chew properly. So we got up a song——(past  
one o'clock it was and a dark and stormy  
morning)——

The moon goes sailing through the sky,  
The cows are chewing——chewing——

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*Broken Glass*

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“He liked that but when he’d had it fifty times he changed it——

The cows go sailing through the sky  
The moon is chewing—chewing—

“And it is better that way; I can recommend it as a lullaby.”

“Thanks, but I’ve some of my own pretty nearly as good. A Norwegian maid left me a legacy——

““Go away du fische mann  
Catch a pretty fish fish—sh—sh,  
Bring it home to baby boy  
Quicker than a wish—wish—shsh.””

“That’s not bad; I’ll remember it when the moon’s chewing palls. . . .

“As I was saying,” said Mrs. Waring, “you and I know the value of our children even if our type is inferior to the Delia type; and if we were bereft of our Delias and didn’t have to dress for dinner and had no time to read we should show up quite as well as the Delias.



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### *Interventions*

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“We use the Delias for them because we want them to have everything of the best. Delias *are* best when they’re little. We enter later on. We couldn’t nurse our babies. All that part of us was metamorphosed into brain—thanks to a mistaken education. Very well; we must nourish them with our brains. We can. And we go and get the best service we can, maids and nurses; we bring them home to our nests like cats bringing mice—for the babies. . . .

“But I’m afraid I’ve got to let Aileen go. She told Martha a story about Indians carrying off children and nearly scared the child to death. And when I went to find them yesterday afternoon over by the empty Taylor cottage, they were playing where a window had been broken and there was broken glass everywhere. It was like dancing on knives. My spine shivers with it still. And there sat Aileen—so lost in a dream that I had to put my hand on her shoulder to rouse her. ‘Oh,’ said she, when I showed her the glass, ‘I thought it was ice!’ She cried when I told her what a ter-

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*Broken Glass*

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ribly dangerous thing she had done. Her tears come easily enough. A pretty little thing, but so stupid. I must do better for Martha."

"I thought," said Mrs. Blake hesitatingly, "that she didn't seem very warmly dressed the other day."

"I don't know why she shouldn't be. I gave her a very good coat. Come to think of it, she hasn't worn it. I wonder why?"

"My Delia told me she had a sister. Perhaps——"

"Sponging on her—hmmm. Poor child! I like her—but, Martha dancing on broken glass. . . . There, that's done. Now, Martha can read it a hundred times more—'Goldilocks was naughty.'"

"Now I must go—and dress. Symbol of degeneracy, as women; but of all that raises us above the Delias, if we *are* above them."

The road was icy and ill kept. Some half-dozen cottages with boarded windows showed silent and black against the red band of sunset and the gray, waving line of moors. The pound of winter surf was like

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*Interventions*

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distant hoof-beats over the frozen land. The only cottages that were open had children in them. Air; air is what we give them now. Air and careful food for the rearing of the best of the next generation. So for that purpose the half-dozen cottages on that island kept their warmth and life all winter, just for the sake of properly reddening the cheeks of a dozen little children for whom city streets and parks are not supposed to furnish the proper brand of air.

"Lovely—lovely," thought Mrs. Waring as she walked crisply toward her own fair window. "The moors and the winter storms shall make up to them for having a middle-aged mother. They shall have all the youth and vigor that I had not—that I had not."

Suddenly she faced about. It was not a footfall or a sigh or a spoken word though it gave the impression of all three. Something behind her had betrayed its presence. . . .

No. There was nothing.

"The wind in the dead grass," she thought, but was not satisfied. A care-taker

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*Broken Glass*

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had been murdered on the other side of the island the winter before. Being the mother of a Martha makes one a coward. If there were no Martha one would go striding anywhere, disregarding fantastic dangers, but *when* there is a Martha, who waits at home for a mother to read the story of Goldilocks one hundred times more, why, a mother must not let the least shadow of danger come near her. Because there are so many ways besides reading Goldilocks in which a mother may be useful.

Therefore she thought sharply about the dead care-taker and vowed that on her next constitutional she would carry a pistol in her pocket—for Martha's sake. The black hedges with their white spots of snow gave no sign; the road behind and in front showed empty but for the gleam of frozen puddles. The wind rattled lightly in the frozen grass. . . .

"I hope ye'll excuse me, mum—" The voice was deprecatory and, thank Heaven! a woman's; though where she had come from out of all that emptiness—

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### *Interventions*

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"I didn't want to scare ye, mum."

"I can't stop," said Mrs. Waring. "If you want to talk to me come to the house. I must get home to—to——"

"Yes, mum; I know, mum, to your little girl. But I can keep pace with you, by your leave, mum, for I was wishin' to speak to you about Aileen——"

"My nurse-maid?"

"The same. I was hearin' she was not givin' ye satisfaction, mum, and would like to speak a word for her—widout offence."

"I have not complained of Aileen. It is true she is sometimes thoughtless. May I ask——"

The woman's figure was so shrouded and huddled that Mrs. Waring, looking all she could, might not distinguish the features. She fancied a resemblance to Mrs. Magillcuddy who came every week to help with the washing. No doubt it was Mrs. Magillcuddy. That would account for her knowledge of Aileen.

Mrs. Waring felt a twinge of annoyance at the thought of Aileen's complaining to

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*Broken Glass*

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Mrs. Magillicuddy. She walked on rapidly, but the other kept as close as her shadow.

"You mean, I suppose, about the broken glass."

"It was very bad, mum; so bad that . . . yet there's worse than broken glass in the world. There's other things that seems no more than the glitter of harmless ice and is really daggers for your heart's blood . . . an' so I was wishin' to speak to ye a word about Aileen. As to the glass, mum, there was no real harm done, an' could ye have seen the lass cryin' her eyes out in her little room that night. . . . Not because ye'd scolded her, but because she'd been that careless. And she could not sleep the night, that tender heart, for seein' the baby welterin' in gore that never was shed at all. Och—those eyes wid tears in them! Surely, mum—surely, ye must have noticed the eyes of her when she looks up at ye wid the hope in them that maybe she has pleased ye? Remember this is her first place and that she was reared gently among the sisters, orphanage as it was, and knows as little of

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### *Interventions*

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the world as a fine lady-girl when she comes out from *her* convent school. She is not yet used to the rough ways of servants. . . .

“But she will be soon. Ah, wirra, wirra, she will be soon. . . .

“I would like her to stay wid ye. . . . I little thought, ten years ago, that she would be eatin’ the bitter bread of service, for bitter it must be, however soft the life; bitter and dangerous for a young girl that is all alone and knows nothin’ at all of the world’s wickedness. . . . Do ye blame her for not seein’ the broken glass? Can ye not guess that the eyes of her were blind with tears for a harsh word ye had given her about mixin’ up the big baby’s stockings wid the little one’s? Do ye mind that each of your children has two dozen little rolled up balls of stockings to be looked after and that they are very near of a size—very near? My Aileen—she never had but two pairs at a time and she washes out the wan pair at night so she can change to the other. And do ye mind that hers are thin cotton—twelve cints the pair they are—and her feet are

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*Broken Glass*

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cold to break yer heart as she sits in the cold wind watchin' your little girl at play, so warm in her English woollen stockings and leggings. And have ye ever been into Aileen's room? Do ye know that the fine gilt radiator in it is never warm and that she has but one thin blanket and a comforter so ragged your dog would scorn it? And when she had a bit of a cough ye were afraid it might be consumption, ye said, and if so ye couldn't have her with the children——”

“You seem to know my house and my servants remarkably, Mrs. Magillicuddy. I will see to Aileen's room at once. I have been very busy, but—really——”

“Ah, save yer anger, mum, for one that desarves it. He's not far away. I am not angry with you, mum, though well I might be. I know with what love ye love yer own. But the world is so large and in such need of the kind and wise that, when one is truly kind and wise like you, mum, it is accounted a sin to let your kindness and wisdom go no further than the soft small heads that are



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*Interventions*

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your own. . . . There are so many children without any mothers at all . . . as yours might be had I been what you thought but now. . . .

“Broken glass! Is it not worse than broken glass for a young thing like that, as white-souled as that bit of snow on the hedge—have ye ever heard the talk of house servants? And the only place she can go to get away from it when ye do not want her for your children is her own little room that is so cold.

“But she does not understand as yet, the whiteness in her is so white, and the servants’ hall is warm and pleasant and full of the laughter that ye sometimes hear and frown about. She knows no more than you do of the black heart beneath the white coat of the rascal that is so soft stepping and pleasant and keeps your silver so clean and bright an’ says ‘Very good, sir,’ to everything the boss says to him——”

“You mean—impossible!”

“Does it not happen every day? Do men and women leave off bein’ men and women

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*Broken Glass*

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because they do your housework for you? Hearts as well as platters can break in the kitchen, and who cares what goes on among the help so long as your house is clean and quiet?

“Broken glass. . . .” Her voice rose with the rising wind, thinly. . . . “Wirra, wirra—an’ a colleen as innocent of the danger of it as your baby that danced upon it unharmed—praise the saints!—unharmed. . . .”

“I do not understand,” said Mrs. Waring, shivering without knowing why.

She leaned forward to pluck at the shawl which the other held about her head. At the moment a shaft of light, probably the search-light from some vessel close inshore—or was it something else?—fell upon the woman’s face. It was gone so quickly that Mrs. Waring could not afterward swear to what she had seen. No. Not Mrs. Magillicuddy’s face, but similar. Lined and worn but singularly noble.

“Who are you?” cried out Mrs. Waring.

The flash of light having passed it seemed so dark that now Mrs. Waring could not even

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### *Interventions*

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distinguish the film of shadow that showed where the woman stood.

“Do ye ask who I am—mother that loves her children? What would *ye* do, then, if ye were dead, and your children’s tears fell upon ye in purgatory? What would ye do if the feet of your own colleen were standing among broken glass that is broken glass indeed?”

“Who are you?” whimpered Mrs. Waring. But the little moon had risen now and showed the moor empty except for the silent lights of the cottages where little children were.

As she stumbled at her own doorstep her butler-opened the door with obsequious concern, and obvious amazement when she cried out—“Aileen—where is she?”

“In her room, I think, m’m; the children being asleep. Shall I call her, m’m?”

“No!”

She hurried to the attic room and knocked. The door was locked. Something stirred softly and it opened. Aileen’s frightened eyes sought her mistress’s face. Mrs. Waring read

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*Broken Glass*

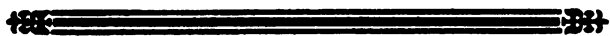
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dread of something having been stolen, of some terrible oversight in the nursery, of instant dismissal.

The girl coughed and shivered. She was wearing her coat but her little cap and apron were ready for instant duty. Mrs. Waring remembered with a shock of contrition that Martha had cried because Aileen's hands were cold as she dressed her.

"Aileen—" sobbed Mrs. Waring. . . .  
"Oh, you poor *little* thing—Come down, child, where it is warm!"





# A DISPENSATION





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## A DISPENSATION

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FROM her inconspicuous corner of the library divan Mrs. Bristow used to listen after dinner to such masculine wisdom as emanated from the easy chairs by the fire-place. One night the talk, wandering grimly among medico-legal anecdotes, lingered on what sometimes happens to the property of widows, orphans, or fools when it is invested for them at fifteen per cent. or more.

Mrs. Bristow spoke through the haze of tobacco smoke:

"I knew a man," she said, "in our town——"

The doctor turned about with polite attention, but Bristow stirred the fire indifferently. "You mean old Thompkins?" After being married ten years, it is astonishing, and rather sad, how well two people know each other's repertoires. Mrs. Bristow continued in the doctor's direction:



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### *Interventions*

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“It belongs with the stories you’ve been telling, though I can’t use big technical words.

“I was in the same grade at school with Bessy and Harold Pringle. They lived with their grandmother. I liked to go home with them afternoons, because she let us play circus in the sitting-room, with a stuffed owl, a china dog with a basket of flowers in his mouth, and a curly marble lion that looked like an ice-cream mold and belonged on the parlor mantel-piece between two waxwork bouquets under glass cases.

“For the tent, we put four chairs together, leaving a space in the middle to sit in. The rungs of the chairs were the cage bars. Then Mrs. Pringle would arrange her India shawl over everything, and there we were. Only we weren’t allowed to touch the lion. She always had to put him into his cage and take him out again. We couldn’t touch the shawl, either. The china dog didn’t matter, because he was broken, anyway, and was glued. He came undone about once a week and had to be glued over again. The owl was rather messy, too, being moth-eaten,

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## *A Dispensation*

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and the wire of his neck broken from our turning his head around so much.

"Mrs. Pringle was little and slim. She wore black silk gowns and thin white aprons, and lace caps with artificial violets in them. When it rained, her prim white hair grew kinky around her forehead.

"She was the stereotyped grandmother of juvenile stories. You remember the pictures of them in those old 'Chatterboxes' we used to have when we were children. She even carried the traditional seed-cakes and raisins and peppermint-drops in her pocket.

"She never had the withered, tired look of most old people. Perhaps it was her religion, for she had been through the ordinary amount of trouble—death and sickness, you know—nobody being left her out of a large family but these two grandchildren. But, somehow, the world's meanness and selfishness and brutality had escaped her notice. It was as if the 'wicked' were a kind of people that belonged to Bible times, with the Hivites and Hittites and Jebusites, wearing sandals and carrying swords; in no way

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### *Interventions*

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associated with shiny hats, canes, and frock-coats. They were not described modernly in the Psalms that she repeated.

“She and Bessy and Harold lived in a story-and-a-half white house, oblong, and sunk down from the road, with a front yard full of ‘pineys,’ ‘laylocks,’ hollyhocks, and bleeding-hearts. There were edgings of box each side the brick path.

“Mrs. Pringle did nearly all the garden work herself. She would put on old gloves, a gingham apron, and a Quakerish lavender silk sunbonnet that made you think of a morning-glory, and potter about with trowel and watering-pot, crooning hymns, tunelessly. The one I best remember was:

“‘When I can read my title clear  
To mansions in the skies,  
I'll bid farewell to every fear,  
And wipe my weeping eyes.’

“She could get that tune pretty well, though she always went too high in the high notes and too low in the low ones, and was rather doubtful about the rest. But it was a

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### *A Dispensation*

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contented, pleasant sound, like a pigeon's cooing.

"They lived in a neat, comfortable way, had one servant, and Mrs. Pringle gave to charity out of proportion to their style of living.

"What property they had—I don't know how much it was or how invested—was in charge of Deacon Thompkins, a stout old person with a smug wreath of gray hair that made a 'crown of righteousness' half-way around his bald spot. He had what they call a 'fine presence,' big seals on his watch-chain, a gold-headed cane, and a silk hat.

"He had been in some sort a protégé of Mrs. Pringle's husband—office boy, clerk, then partner. At that time I supposed him extraordinary, but have come to believe since that the type is as common as wax dolls, or china of 'open-stock' pattern.

"I've seen portraits of Tammany politicians that might be his brothers, and have met him in Wall Street, sharpened and urbanized. They all have a factitious air of benevolence, flabby pink cheeks, shallow

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*Interventions*

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eyes, and the respect of their fellow men—of a sort.

“In Mrs. Pringle’s youth the ‘oak-and-vine’ simile was thought beautiful and true. Her heroines had been Amelias and Angelinas, with wasp waists and a habit of swooning. Her attitude toward men was Biblically servile. She preferred them big and fat, with hearty voices; and discriminated in favor of good clothes—receiving those whom she approved at their own valuation, which was high.

“This reverence for men extended even to Harold, who, being a ‘man-child,’ bore the responsibility of keeping up the family name and honorable traditions. He was to have most of the money, and the family Bible, and a college education; Bessy, being a girl, might receive the linen and silver, when she married; but her share of the money was to be under Harold’s control.

“You understood when I began, didn’t you, that the deacon lost their money? That part of the story is as hackneyed as—a

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### *A Dispensation*

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recipe for cake. Put certain ingredients together according to directions, and you know what to expect. The widow and the fatherless and the thief. You know the stale old plot. You touch it somewhere almost every day in your work. It makes you sour and tired. But you mustn't be so pessimistic. The world is growing better, really. Of course it seems slow to men. Women are more apt to have time to watch and—synthesize—isn't that a good word?—and prophesy.

"I don't know just what the deacon's scheme was, but suddenly the Pringles were amazingly prosperous. Harold and Bessy had pretty new clothes. Mrs. Pringle was called for by a livery team when she went visiting. There was new china, and a whole toyshop for us to play circus with. What a Christmas they had! A children's party, with tree, candles, dolls, drums; and the way Mrs. Pringle distributed stockings and shawls and mittens and turkeys and barrels of flour among the poor was simply scandalous! She grew twenty years younger that

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### *Interventions*

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winter, and had a new silk gown, made in the latest style.

“Harold told me a long, glittering tale of a mine and shares and income, swelling around like a little millionaire, and explaining what magnificent things he would buy, and how kind he would be to us all. I remember Bessy looking over some colored fashion-plates twenty years out of date, selecting designs for the dresses she wanted; choosing the figures with prettiest faces.

“The deacon was always at the house with papers to be signed. Mrs. Pringle showed us a box of red paper seals he had brought her, lowering her voice mysteriously as she forbade us ever to touch them. She was half afraid of them herself, as something occult and legal. She was so fluttered and happy and important—perhaps it was worth it to be as happy as that for a little while. I don’t know.

“Children are queer. Even then there was something about the tap of that gold-headed cane that didn’t sound right to me;

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## *A Dispensation*

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and Harold would swell and choke when the deacon's fat fingers patted his head.

"Once when I was enumerating all their beautiful new things at my own tea-table, my father frowned more and more as I talked.

"'Mines!' he said—'Infernal scoundrel!'

"Mother hushed him up at the swear word, but looked anxious.

"'Can't anybody do anything?'

"'He knows how to keep within the law,' said father, and his face set like a trap. He was a quiet man, lean and tall, with bright black eyes and a thin, stern mouth. There was nothing sleek or hearty about *him*.

"It was one of those sweet, cold days in May, with a raw wind whipping apple-blossom petals past the window; but the sun came in on the red roses of the new carpet, and a few sticks snapped in the fireplace. In the middle of the mahogany table was a bowl of arbutus, reflected as if in a pool of water. I can't begin to tell you how peacefully lovely the room was. Grandma went



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*Interventions*

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around wiping off invisible dust with a cloth, singing:

“Should earth against my soul engage,  
And fiery darts be hurled,  
Then I can smile at Satan’s rage,  
And face a frowning world.’

“We young ones were playing circus under her shawl, as usual. We had the curly marble lion. None of our wonderful new things seemed so lovably fierce as he did; there was attraction in being forbidden to touch him, and in the ceremony of grandma’s lifting him from the mantel-piece to his cage.

“It was Saturday morning. I had permission to stay all day. There was nothing like grandma’s blackberry jam, and the flower pattern of the new china was ever so much prettier than ours at home. It was nearly dinner-time when we heard the deacon’s cane on the walk, and our hearts went down at the thought that he might stay to dinner. When the bell jingled, Harold said: ‘*I ain’t going out of here to say “How de do.”*’ Keep

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## *A Dispensation*

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quiet, so he won't know we're here. Pretend he's an Injun and we don't dast move!'

"The big voice and squeaky shoes lumbered in, accompanied by grandma's fluttered little comments on the weather, her pleasure in seeing him, and inquiries after his family.

"We peeked out from the shawl like mice. Harold stuck out his tongue. There were the same shiny hat, long black coat, and gold-headed cane.

"He looked hard at the arbutus, in an abstracted way, mopping his pink face and clearing his throat, as if the room were too warm and he had something on his mind. Mrs. Pringle had to keep up her polite little talk about weather and church, till he should begin to trundle out his big, uninteresting words. We went back to our play, with whispers and pantomime. Probably he had been explaining for some time how it all happened, and his own innocence and loveliness, but the first words that we noticed were in Mrs. Pringle's voice, quieter and evener than usual; so slow that it was as if

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### *Interventions*

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the syllables had to be thought out separately and put together with care:

“‘Do I understand that even this house is lost?’

“‘I deeply regret——’

“‘Is this house lost?’

“‘Yes, ma’am.’

“‘And your house, too?’

“He stammered and mumbled, not answering *that* question, but referring in a general way to heavy losses.

“But she kept looking right at him with an odd intentness, her eyes strange and bright; not as if listening to what he said, but as if seeing something she had not noticed before. Her face was perfectly white, except for a flushed spot in the centre of the forehead.

“She nodded slowly; meaning, I think, that she saw through shams to the rat-soul of him at last. He squirmed and reddened and stuttered for awhile, then fell into silence under that strange stare. At last she drew a deep breath and spoke as if to herself:

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## *A Dispensation*

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“‘I was warned; but you had been my husband’s friend, and you have such a habit of talking about honesty and benevolence and friendship, as though they were things you valued.’

“‘He spluttered and swelled, but she paid no attention.

“‘It’s curious how I could have been mistaken; it’s all so plain now.’ She looked him over with an air of surprise—not hatred, nor even resentment; the gulf between them was too wide for that. He had stopped being polite. His little eyes were bloodshot and fierce, and his neck seemed to swell out above his collar.

“‘There is nothing at all left?’ she asked, and he snapped—‘Nothing whatever!’

“‘We are—beggars,’ said poor grandma.

“‘You know how commonly stories speak of ‘wringing the hands’—that was the only time I ever saw it done, and I shall never forget. She held them close to her chest—such gentle, transparent old hands—the fingers dragging at each other as though they held some snaky thing that hurt, and must be destroyed.

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## *Interventions*

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"He shrugged his big shoulders, took his hat, and rose.

"‘I am old,’ she said, ‘to—go out to service. I don’t think of anything else, unless, perhaps—plain sewing. But my eyesight is not what it was. Isn’t it possible for you to refund something for my little grandchildren?’

"It was an unlucky speech, touching the gentleman’s honor with too matter-of-fact a word.

"‘Refund!’ he roared—‘*Refund*, madam!’

"But his threatening manner failed to impress her. A change was coming over her, like a quiet gray shadow—like the numbness after a wound. The dreadful motion of her hands stopped, but they stayed clasped as if she were praying. She spoke in that curious intoning way which she always used when repeating Scripture. I believe she knew most of the Bible by heart:

"‘“*I have been young and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.*”’

"‘I have not been wise,’ she went on, but not to him, ‘but I have tried to do right. I—

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## *A Dispensation*

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must believe my Bible—"nor his seed begging bread."'

"She stopped, and the gray shadow drew closer. Her eyelids drooped. She was between him and the door, so that he must either climb over the table or knock her down in order to escape. He couldn't do that exactly, but while he stood there waiting he looked very like an angry boar.

"At last she opened her eyes and spoke in a clear, expressionless tone, mechanically, as if something spoke through her:

*"Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth; and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off; and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know."*

"She swayed, caught at the table, overturning the bowl of arbutus, which broke on the floor, and then she fell. The broken glass cut her forehead slightly, so that her pretty hair and some of the flowers were stained with blood; and there she lay, crumpled and little, at the feet of that—swine.

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### *Interventions*

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“He stood stock-still, his mouth half open, and never made a motion to raise her. Not knowing any one else was in the room, he looked about him in a scared, vacant way, stepped across her, and was making for the door, with his head on his shoulder and his flabby mouth working as he looked back, when Harold scuttled out from our tent and began to pommel his legs, kicking and biting, and screaming, ‘I’ll kill you!’

“That brought the deacon to, a little, especially when Bessy and I came forth also, our voices uplifted hysterically. He shook Harold off: ‘I’m going for the doctor, you little fool. She’s just fainted. Pour water on her face!’

“So Harold and Bessy brought water, crying and patting her hands. I got out of the window, being scared at the blood, and ran for home. I met my father on his way home to dinner, and managed to make him understand after a fashion. He said ‘What!’ in a roar that made my ears throb. I believe he understood it to be murder, at first.

“I don’t know who did get the doctor, but

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### *A Dispensation*

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it wasn't the deacon. Mrs. Pringle was partly paralysed, did not remember what had happened, and her words for things were confused. The doctor said, though, that she might get better; would never be quite the same, but better, and comfortable enough. The neighbors took everything in charge. Bessy and Harold came over to my house. Father went around with a grim, fighting face. Mother told me, in greatest confidence, that my father was a good lawyer, and that it was just possible Mrs. Pringle's house might not have to go.

"The scandal spread, for you may be sure we children made a great tale; glorying in it, histrionically, as children will. We even remembered enough of poor grandma's 'curse' so that they could look it up in their concordances. It was somewhere in Isaiah.

"Most of the business men raged against the deacon, even talking about running him out of town, though they didn't seem to know just how to go about it. Then they had confidence in what father might do, and waited



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### *Interventions*

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for him to begin. But the women and the minister were inclined to side with the deacon. It was all a 'distressing misunderstanding' and 'the hand of God,' said the minister, and the deacon was still his 'dear brother.'

"You see, it's this way—some of the dearest and whitest old men in the world are deacons, but wolves like nothing so much as sheep's clothing, and people who are stupid and innocent and good themselves can't tell the sham from the real. The minister was like that. He couldn't understand or see. The deacon had always given largely to the church, and father, who headed the other faction, was known to have Huxley and Darwin in his library, and had referred in court to Ingersoll—not anything about religion, you know, but it was Ingersoll. That was enough. Those little towns aren't so *very* far from Cotton Mather's time.

"Well—she had cursed him. One thinks of curses as venomous things that don't care whom they hurt 'from generation to generation.' You know how stories of them run.

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## *A Dispensation*

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This one wasn't like that; it was more as if she were stating a fact that had come to her knowledge. Her voice had seemed far away, impersonal, dignified, almost indifferent. She might have been looking at things spread out like a map, describing what would happen to him, as a person in a balloon might remark, 'I see where the Hudson flows into the bay.'

"One may think as one likes about those things. Perhaps she had stirred up a little piece of conscience that he had somewhere about him; perhaps—though this seems impossible—he had not meant to defraud her, and the minister and the church women were right about its being a 'distressing misunderstanding' on grandma's part. If that were so, of course he would brood on the harm he had unwittingly done, until—or perhaps he was ripe for it anyway. That was the doctor's opinion, and very likely the correct one, though mother always spoke of it in a hushed way as a 'dispensation,' and father, notwithstanding his free-thinking tendencies, never contradicted her. In fact, I have seen

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*Interventions*

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him nod his head in a kind of satirical assent, as though such a solution fitted well enough with his own ideas.

"It was Sunday, a week after Mrs. Pringle's shock. She was out of danger, the doctor said. Harold and Bessy and I had been in to see her, and her eyes smiled, though she could move nothing but her right hand. She looked quite happy, and noticed the flowers—adder-tongues and trilliums—that we had brought. Apparently she had forgotten all about that miserable morning and what had struck her down so. We pinned a little bunch of violets to the sheet, where she could smell them, kissed her, and tiptoed out in our squeaky Sunday shoes, to go to church.

"The sermon was on brotherly love—forgiving until seventy times seven, and all that, and with something about the tongue being a 'little member' and 'how great a matter a little fire kindleth'—being intended, I suppose, as a rebuke to those who had been talking about the deacon. The minister was the sort of man that gets up petitions for the

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### *A Dispensation*

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pardon of murderers. I believe he almost hated my father. At any rate he prayed for him that morning. I don't mean, of course, that he referred to him directly, but with Biblical quotations. It was always understood in the congregation that father was meant by 'the fool hath said in his heart,' and that our pew was 'the seat of the scornful.'

"Father always went to church; sitting square and straight in his pew, never bowing his head during prayer. That Sunday was the only time I ever caught any expression in his face. It was gone so quickly I couldn't be sure, but it seemed a sort of boy's grin, not ill-natured or resentful. He had been studying into Mrs. Pringle's affairs that week, and was beginning to think he saw a way out, and where to have the deacon. Bessy went to sleep in his lap, and Harold, obscured between him and the high end of the pew, was allowed to draw pictures on an old envelope. I could see, and envy, from where I had to sit 'like a lady' by my mother.

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### *Interventions*

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"The deacon was not at church, but his family were: his wife, an apologetic, thin little thing, in heavy, beaded silks; his daughter-in-law, with her crutches (it was said her husband abused her); and his son, heavy-jowled, greasy—of a build similar to his father's. Poor Mrs. Thompkins looked across at the Pringle children once, and then put her handkerchief to her eyes. The daughter-in-law was a fierce, repressed-looking woman with remote Indian blood—but her mother-in-law seemed to be leaning on her while she cried.

"As we were all coming out after church, some one behind us asked the elder Mrs. Thompkins where the deacon was, and she said that he had been rather poorly lately. The woman who had asked was voluble and loud in sympathy. There was a quality in her voice that indicated her remarks were for father's ears as much as for Mrs. Thompkins's.

"The organ accompanied our retreat, with those big soft chords that jar under one's feet and seem to mean all sorts of solemn,

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## *A Dispensation*

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fateful things. (Deacon Thompkins had given that organ to the church, by the way.) Outside were sunshine and sweet smells from the trees, and a few white butterflies playing in the road. There was a lamp-post quite near the church entrance. A man stood leaning his back against the post, holding his silk hat in his hand.

"It was Deacon Thompkins. The minister went up to shake hands with him, hesitated, and drew back a step. Then other people came up. The deacon was whining—'Please help a poor man!' He seemed not to know any one.

"Something had happened to his brain that made him think he was a beggar; so he stood there and begged, the spring sun shining on his bald spot, his sleek hat held out for pennies. It was spectacular enough.

"*“And desolation shall come upon thee suddenly,”*” a voice near us said softly. It was young Mrs. Thompkins, leaning on her crutches. She did not look sorry. Then up came the Thompkins carriage with the son, the elder Mrs. Thompkins in hysterics, and

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*Interventions*

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the doctor. They took the deacon home, objecting, but always in the same words, 'Please help a poor man!' Beggar he was, so far as he knew, and the curse had fallen.

"Well, they had a nurse for him and kept him at home except for drives now and then, but sometimes he would get away and be found in the most crowded part of the town, with his whine—'Please help a poor man!'

"He was harmless and gentle, with a dazed and pitiful expression that never changed, but he was so persistent in getting away that the family grew careless at last, particularly after they had met so many losses that they could not afford to keep the nurse. Then you could see him almost every day—grown thin and bent; shabby, too; the silk hat battered and fuzzy. Strangers never imagined he was not a real beggar. When his wife would come after him there would sometimes be pennies in his hat, and she would cry.

"But she died about two years afterward. The son lost what little property

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## *A Dispensation*

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was left, and drifted away somewhere. The big house was boarded up and labelled 'For Sale.'

"Everybody said that the deacon ought to be sent to an institution; some said the poor-house; but no one did anything.

"There was an old tool-house on the place, with a stove in it and a carpenter's bench, and he lived there when he was not at his post. No one bought the great bare house. Such history of it as was authentic was melancholy enough, and in time they added a ghost story. So although a good many people looked at it, the boards remained at the windows and the sign 'For Sale' on the lawn, and the deacon in his tool house was undisturbed.

"People were kind to him, now that his beggary was an achieved fact. His hat would be quite heavy with pennies at the end of a good day. They saw that there was wood for his stove in winter, and brought him food and arranged his carpenter's bench into some semblance of a bed, with mattress, pillows, and blankets.



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### *Interventions*

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"About five years after that Sunday a day or two passed without his being seen.

"They went and broke open the door. He was dead—lying as straight and dignified on the bench as a crusader on a monument.

"My father said that his body was so shrunken and light that he could have carried it himself without difficulty. The face, he said, had a curiously contented look, as of one whose accounts with the world are squared. Perhaps they were.

"A little hoard, amounting to a hundred dollars in pennies, dimes, and quarters, was found under the floor, and used for funeral expenses.

"Grandma lived for some time after that. Father had saved a good deal from the wreck, though I fancy he stretched a point and came out of the transaction lighter in pocket himself and owner of some bad securities.

"She regained her speech pretty well, and could walk with a cane about the house and into the garden. But she never spoke of the deacon, and no one dared mention him in

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### *A Dispensation*

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her presence. My father seemed to take his place, though she never appeared to know much about what he had done for her.

“Sometimes, however, she would bless him, Scripturally, and quote passages about the ‘righteous man’—embarrassing him horribly, though I’m not sure he didn’t enjoy it, in a qualmish way.

“Once he said, with a rather foolish, shamefaced smile, that he hoped her blessings were as powerful as her curses.

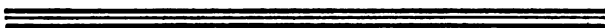
“Mother said, ‘You mustn’t speak lightly of such things!’

“I’m not sure that he was speaking lightly.”





THE  
EXPERIMENTER





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# THE EXPERIMENTER

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## I

ANNABEL FRASER was taking life very seriously, even so long ago as when Luke Bailey fell in love with her; and as Luke was taking it pretty seriously himself, in his own way, they made quite a pair. She resented—or thought she resented—being fallen in love with for her face. And she was so used to being beautiful and hearing sweet things said about her that very likely she did tire of what would have been the breath of life to most girls. She preserves that pose still, though it is not so necessary as then, and I suspect she is seldom annoyed. Not but that she is splendid now, and will be when her hair is white. Age will touch her only as it does a picture or a statue. But of course thirty-four is different from twenty-six.

The reason Luke had never said those ob-

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### *Interventions*

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jectionable things was because he couldn't, being too busy thinking them. But Annabel misunderstood and supposed him to be the one among them all who appreciated her for her mental and spiritual traits, and so she decided—quite in cold blood—to like him more than the others. Will was her strong point. She was always talking about it. So she loved him because she willed it. Well, “He that ruleth his spirit is greater than he that taketh a city.” There may be some kind of love that can be turned off or on. I'm not competent to judge. But once her mind was made up her slow blood must have quickened toward him, for if ever a boy was made to be loved, it was Luke. I should know. He had no mother when he was a little boy, and so adopted me because I was his next-door neighbor, and laughed when I found him robbing my orchard. I was old and alone, and he came into my life and taught me—wonderful things—love and hope—things that children know.

He was a few years younger than Annabel Fraser, conscious of his youth, and al-

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most tragically anxious to be a good puppy and do as he was told—an attitude always pleasing to the Annabel Frasers.

So they became engaged, and this, so far as I could make out, was the manner of that remarkable transaction. He kissed her. Then they had a tremendous debate about whether she ought to forgive him for it. The forgiveness was accomplished at length, but it took a lot of magazine story dialogue to bring it about. The psychological kind. (She has written a few stories, you know, among her other—duties.)

The kiss had happened under the moon, in a garden with the smell of roses and the flutter of moths, and in the great house behind them a waltz with violins in it . . . and Japanese lanterns. And so he kissed her, being four-and-twenty and a man, and having just received his hospital appointment, and therefore beginning to think about a wife. And she used up the rest of that glorious evening in lecturing him, as I have said, for his joyous and innocent little sin; telling him all about how noble it was just to be



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friends, and how much there was to be done in the world, and how she had no time for that sort of love, but must work. And he, poor boy! having put the great question to her like a man, along with his kiss, must wait through an interminable evening of roses and moonlight and waltz music, while she argued this way and that, and served up sociology—stale as a yesterday's pancake—from her college course. But she said yes, at the end.

These solemn preliminaries over, encouraged by her glorification of a life of work, he shyly told her something about his own ambitions.

But Luke never had the gift of tongues. He probably made his few remarks mumblingly, so that she only caught a word here and there. Not enough to understand. (Not that she *could* have understood, anyway.) For I know that when he used to talk it over with me, it would be a jumble of technical language and boy's slang, made more incoherent by enthusiasm. Nevertheless through it all one thing was clear and intelligible as

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sunlight—the constant ache of Pity in him and the desire to be of use.

“I couldn’t stand it at all, Mater, if it weren’t for looking forward to doing my share.”

“A physician ought to be more impersonal, I should think,” I would say. “Can you do your best when you sympathize so?”

“For awhile I can. I suppose I shall go to pieces sooner than if I didn’t. . . . But knowing what I do I couldn’t do anything else, you know. It may kill me to do it, but it would kill me worse not to, so there it is. . . . But it isn’t quite so bad when you are working along the experimental line. Find out something new. There’s so much to find out! H—— was trying to fix some guinea-pigs with cerebro-spinal meningitis, the other day. That’s one of the mysteries, you know. Meningitis, pneumonia, scarlet fever—and, most of all, yellow fever. We don’t know anything at all about them. I’d like to do something that way. Think of being able to save the kiddies from scarlet fever as they are saved now from diphtheria!”

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A man might consider he had lived, eh, Mater?"

As that was the manner of his conversation with me, I supposed him to have talked in much the same way with her. And it is quite improbable that she understood anything of what he tried to tell her. No doubt she waited rather impatiently for him to finish, for she was heart and soul in a scheme of world reformation—meaning settlement work and potted plants at that time, though she has varied it in later years with other methods. Of course little things like the discovery of a disease germ, or skin-grafting, or making a club-foot into a real foot that you can walk with, must seem small matters to one who aims at nothing less than lifting the whole round world nearer the stars by one heave of her capable shoulders. She was patient, however, with Luke's little ambitions, smiling kindly, as one does when a good child stammers forth some enthusiastic explanation of his little play with his toys; and he saw her dark eyes smiling at him kindly out of the shadows, and caught his breath at

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her beauty, and called her an angel and implored her to do with him as she would.

And so they were engaged, and he spent all he had upon a ring, and went back to the hospital to fit himself for his very small share in Annabel's big task of reforming the world. He wrote me letters, all of Annabel—Annabel—Annabel—and sent me pictures of her that I was to be sure to return. And oh! the times I had to be told how good she was, how wonderful! And how altogether contemptible and unfit was Luke Bailey. . . . Then his letters grew less frequent. I heard but little of him for a year, though I understood that he had a reputation for overworking himself. As to Annabel, she got her name in the papers as a society girl who had forsworn the pleasant life she was born to for charity's sake; and because of her lovely face they all printed her picture, so she was a celebrated person.

## II

Luke wrote excitedly that Annabel was at one of the summer hotels that I could see from my window, and would I please call on her? She was the most wonderful girl in the world, he explained, with as much enthusiasm as though it was a new idea. He was coming in a day or so, himself—had been very busy but never forgot me. I would have gone to great lengths to please that boy. Had he wished to make surgical experiments upon my right hand, even to amputation, I should have given it freely—yet I put off calling on Annabel, saying to myself that she was young and I was old, and she could make the call herself. But she did not care to thus offer the first move, and the days went on until the one when Luke came.

On that June night I lay awake, thinking much about Luke and his lady-love. The stars were thick and bright, the hotels glowed silently among the black billows of the mountains, and the tree-frogs were loud in their

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pleasure at the heavy dew. It was all that a June night should be, except that somewhere a cow was lamenting for her calf. In the night's stillness her great voice boomed out its elemental grief with perfect regularity. As an arraignment of the conduct of the universe its eloquence was without flaw. I thought sadly of her little hour or two of delight as the soft nose fumbled for her ready milk, and then—the separation, the little creature borne away toward its brief education for veal, or perhaps killed at once. Shudderingly I recalled a story that they sometimes killed the calf where the mother could see it done, so as to save her that long bellowing distress. For if she saw the end, of course she would know that it was over, and quietly go back to work (after something of a tantrum—rather sport to watch from the other side of the fence) upon her comfortable cud and the production of milk. Oh, well—what of it! One cannot shoulder the griefs of all the sorrowful animals in the world; nor of sorrowful human creatures. There is too much of it. So very much that one is not

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necessarily a coward to withdraw from it all, as I did, and read and write and think for a lifetime among old, bloodless books; like the monks in the Middle Ages. (Yet, it would be a pity if, having lived out one's life like that, one should conclude at the end of forty years that it had been wasted. Forty years is a good deal when considered in the lump, though when gone it is sand that slipped through the fingers.)

Luke Bailey had chosen the better way of living—that of violent work. But then he was a man and belonged to a new generation. In my young days, there was still the remnant of a notion that the world was being taken care of by a kind of absentee landlord—forgetful, but still one could depend upon the proper thing being done in time. Nowadays people seem to think they have to take a hand in the work. A girl, too, is a very different creature in some ways. Better, of course. I thought with envy of his Annabel's education and her reputation as a golf player and her settlement work. But of the girl herself I thought with distaste—how she was

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like a great pink-and-white dahlia with thick petals arranged perfectly, but never touched by bee or humming-bird, or butterfly, or human nose. And there she was now, over among the lights somewhere, and he with her. He had come and I hadn't made that call. He would be offended. He might even not come over to see his old friend. I tried not to be as jealous as if I were only one or two and twenty instead of far past the half-century mark. . . . "If I could only believe she is the right one," I was thinking—and then a pebble tapped against the window. I thrust out my head with its little thin, gray braids bobbing on either side, and there, looking up, a pale blur against the dark lawn, was the face of Luke Bailey.

"Mater!" he called softly. (The word had been sentimentally agreed upon between us before he went to college, years before.)

"I couldn't go without seeing you, Mater," said Luke.

"I was beginning to think you could. I was trying not to be jealous of Annabel."

He laughed a little. "You needn't be jeal-



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ous of Annabel." His voice mingled in a ghostly way with the rustle of a sudden gust of wind. "You needn't be jealous of Annabel. She—doesn't want me, after all, Mater—and there's only you."

I threw on a dressing-gown and covered my gray wisps of braids with a shawl and stumbled out to him through the dark house. The slow hall clock struck twelve, beginning as I opened my chamber door and ending just as Luke's arms, cold and wet with dew, went around me. And his lips against my old cheek were as cold as though the warmth of life could never return.

I sat on the top step, and he sat at my feet and put his head in my lap—very quiet.

"You aren't to blame her," he said at length, rather sharply, as though I had spoken some of my angry thoughts. "Remember *that*, Mater, always. It's only that she doesn't understand."

"What is it that she doesn't understand?"

"Me—and everything that I believe in most. The necessity of finding out things. The minute she saw me she began about

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### *The Experimenter*

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how glad she was I had come, because she had to write a paper on vivisection for her club and wanted me to tell her all I knew about it. A lot of jays want to stop it, you know. They seem to think it's done for fun! They say it has never done a bit of good. They say—Oh—I don't know what they say.

“Well, this evening she talked about what a terrible thing vivisection is. I never saw her so worked up—and said she wanted me to help her write the paper, and—think of this!—to work against vivisectionists with the other physicians that are against them. What could I say? I let her go on. Then I said—I said—that I believed in it, that if it wasn't permitted, the whole science of healing would stop short and come to nothing. I told her that any body that said that such experiments had accomplished nothing were either fools or liars, no matter what their names were. I said that I had made experiments myself. I thought that would clinch it—and it did! She stopped talking, and rose up, like—like a queen, or something, and gave me back the ring—as if it were red hot—

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and went away . . . and . . . and that's about all."

"Give her time. She may see the other side."

"No," he answered apathetically. "I don't think she will. I don't believe she ever does see the other side of anything. People are so, sometimes. She wouldn't hear my case at all. If she had cared she would have listened to what I tried so hard to say. . . . It's such a queer world, Mater. I—I'm rather tired of it. But it's nice that there's always you. . . .

"She took me by surprise, so. If I'd had any idea what was coming I might have put up an argument. . . . Why, Mater, if you—if you had a baby, and it had diphtheria, wouldn't you bless the horse whose blood was made into antitoxin? Especially as it didn't hurt the horse one one-hundredth as much as docking his tail would? Annabel's horses," he laughed almost tearfully, "have docked tails. When I spoke of it she said, 'Oh, that's different.' She—she just wouldn't hear my case at all, Mater.

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## *The Experimenter*

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“I even tried to quote the Bible a little. —‘It is expedient that one man should die for the people’—but she said it didn’t mean what I said it did, and that anyhow such a comparison was sacrilegious. I didn’t mean it so; only, it was a phrase that happened to be running in my head. *‘It is expedient that one man should die for the people.’* It is so sensible. Of course it’s expedient. Sometimes a man can accomplish a lot by dying, and if he can he ought to. And why shouldn’t an animal die as well as a man? . . .

“Oh, Mater! If you’d ever been in a hospital—if you’d ever seen the out-patients come in—and what one can do is almost nothing. A little medicine, advice that won’t be followed, and then back to tuberculosis tenements or to those places near the sewers where the shadings on the map get so thick that they’re black, showing the death-rate. . . . But if you get a kiddy on his back where you can take care of him for awhile, why, you can straighten him out so that he has a chance of fighting his own little big battles with the world. You take away the

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handicap, to a certain extent. So it seemed worth doing—orthopædic surgery did. I did want so to be a big surgeon—one of the way-up ones.”

“Didn’t orthopædic surgery seem worth while to her?”

“I wouldn’t say that, though I never was able to interest her in it. That was because I’m never any good at telling things. I never can say anything the way I want to. If I could only have put it to her the right way—but you see she is one of these people who have such beastly good health always. D’you know I’ve sometimes thought that health that is too good is a sort of unsoundness. The body that is ignorant of pain has a flabby spot, like an unused muscle. Apollo Belvidere would cut up rough over a little toothache. The calmest faces in the world you’ll find among cripples. The quietest eyes I ever saw belonged to a cancer patient. . . . Of course, one has to hate pain. It would be absurd not to do that. And yet—pain is only pain. There are worse things. So many very much worse things. . . .

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*The Experimenter*

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"If only Annabel's crowd would spend a little of their time getting after peddlers' horses and starving cats and dogs—if they'd investigate the gentle country butcher instead of sniffing round the doors of laboratories. . . .

"Animals—" said Luke—"I guess nobody likes 'em more than I do. Guinea-pigs are such jolly little codgers, and they do so get it in the neck. (Annabel and her friends seem to think we use nothing but dogs—I wonder why?) But, guinea-pigs or dogs—how many bushels of 'em tip the scales against a baby—even a no-count, trashy baby—and when it's a nice baby—one that ought to live for the sake of the race. . . .

"The truth is, Mater, we're up against it. The world's bound to be not altogether pleasant, any way you fix it. It takes pain to cure pain, and a hair of the dog that bit you——

"Cruelty? What isn't cruel? Meat comes from the slaughter-house, and I suppose it had a good time chewing its cud. Fish don't like to die, probably, and the hook they're

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### *Interventions*

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taken with doesn't hurt a bit more than a lot of these experiments they're so hot about. We have to eat animals to live. Why isn't that as bad as using them to find out things?

"Well—there—I've made you unhappy.

. . . I say, do you remember how you caught me up in your apple-tree? I never will forget how you looked up as I looked down. I was scared, and then I saw your mouth corners wiggle, and then you laughed, and I came down, and you had me into the dining-room and gave me some smelly, sticky fruit cake. . . . That was about a hundred years ago—just about; in a hundred years, a thousand, where'll we all be? Shucks! What's the use of howling because you're hurt? Still, it *is* a major operation, you know, to be turned down like that—and—and there wasn't any anæsthetic." He drew in his breath sharply. "She is the most beautiful woman in the world. . . .

"I go South to-night. I just came up to say good-by to you—and her.

"Havana. Some army doctors are working on yellow-fever down there. We are go-

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*The Experimenter*

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ing down there to—to make sure. It may be a rather long job, and I didn't know when I might see you again."

"Yellow-fever—why, my *dear!* I can't have you do that. It's dangerous."

He did not answer at once.

"No more than anything else, Mater. We're only going to—to take a look at the mosquitoes, you know. They think they've got the beast that carries the germ. *Culex fasciatus* most call him, though some think *Stegomyia* is a prettier name."

"I should think you could get all the mosquitoes you want right around here."

"Ho! *These!* Shucks! You people don't know anything about mosquitoes up here. All you've got is a poor little *Culex* something or other that does the best he can and doesn't mean any harm. Why, you never saw an *Anopheles*, and as for *Stegomyia*, he *is* a mosquito, I can tell you. There's all the difference that there is between rabbit hunting and going for big game in India."

But I was uneasy. "You know you must take care of yourself. Think of all you can



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### *Interventions*

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accomplish in a long lifetime, so don't—take liberties with it—now, before it's fairly begun."

"Oh, yes," he said indifferently. Then he brightened up and lifted his head.

"You've no idea what a fascinating thing this is. It's one of *the* mysteries, you know—yellow-fever is, or has been. Finley is pretty sure, but hasn't proved it. It has to be proved. They want to verify the kind of mosquito that does the job, and how long after he bites a patient before he can give it to another—and—oh, a number of things. Just think, Mater! It kills fifty per cent., even when they have care. When they haven't—when it comes down on a city or a military camp, with a rush like fire, then it's nearly ninety per cent. And it isn't an easy death, you know . . . it isn't nice and clean and dignified. Mysterious. People were exposed over and over again, and it never touched 'em. And others that hadn't been near a case were knocked over, while others in the same house were all right. So what can you make of it? It simply can't be *fomites*. No, Finley

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*The Experimenter*

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is right. And Lazear—you heard about Dr. Lazear?"

His voice dropped to a tone of awe and respect. "He died. After he was bitten. It was in the yellow-fever hospital, and he saw a *Culex fasciatus* biting—and let it bite all it wanted to—though he knew—all *but* the proving—just what would happen. Well it happened. And you can't let a man like that die for nothing, you know. So they're going to prove it so that there can't ever be any more doubt. Sanarelli and the Frenchmen—they think Americans don't know anything. But we'll soon have the laugh on them."

"But what is *your* part in this performance, child? I take it these people are physicians of standing and years?"

"You bet they are! But—oh, well, I'm a choir-boy, an acolyte, a hanger-on, an office-boy. The big guns have to have 'em, you know."

"And you are going to be a bacteriologist as well as surgeon?" said I, my pride in him swelling.

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*Interventions*

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"Ye—es, that's one way of putting it." He laughed slightly.

There was something not quite frank in his manner, but I knew better than to force his confidence.

"Well—if it's nothing worse than entomological big game—I don't like it, though. Yellow-fever—you are so much to me," I muttered.

"Am I?" He pushed aside the shawl from my head, and drew forth a wisp of hair, clipping it off with his knife.

"For a mascot," he apologized.

Then he rose, and turning his back, looked long at the distant glimmer of the hotel, with the heaving dark mountains back of it, and the thick brightness of stars above it.

"Queer she couldn't understand," he muttered. "It seems so simple. . . . Well, I'm off. Will you write very often, please? I may not answer regularly, but I think such a lot of your letters. And when there's a quarantine letters can come in easier than they can go out. And tell me—no—*don't* tell me about her. When a thing's done it's done. That's

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### *The Experimenter*

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good surgery—make a clean job of it—saw off the bone and tie up the arteries—and forget about it—if you can. . . . Good-by.”

He kissed me and very gently loosened my hands from his arm. I was trying to say so many things, chiefly imploring him, as a real mother would have done, to be careful.

At the gate he turned again, for the sake of using the word I loved—“Good-by, Mater.”

### .III

Any one who cares—but not many do—may read of the different circumstances of that great experiment. Of how, in the first place, they went into a little dark, lonely house, “in an open uncultivated field,” and the little house was prepared for them with sheets and pillow-cases and all sorts of things that had been fingered by yellow-fever. They wore clothing of yellow-fever patients; some of it had been taken from the dead. And so for twenty days they made free with death, slept with it, ate with it—I can’t make out whether it was done with military precision

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### *Interventions*

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and solemn etiquette, or whether they were jolly (the reports are so prim, giving nothing but the essential facts), but I suspect they played poker a bit and sang and strummed their banjos. I rather think they were jolly. Men of that sort are not apt to be solemn when danger is about. But it was unspeakable—that furnishing of the house. There was a loving attention to detail that would have cheered Dante, or the Inquisition. Still, there was one advantage, and that was the absence of mosquitoes. That was the whole object of this part of the experiment, you see—to keep out the mosquitoes. And nobody in that horrible little place—"So far as possible resembling a ship's hold"—was sick. That meant that *fomites* had nothing to do with it, and that quarantine is of no use whatever.

So they went to a much pleasanter house, with fresh air and sunshine and clean linen—clean as surgeons understand cleanness. And here, also, there were screens, and half of the house party lived on one side of the screens and the other half on the other side.

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*The Experimenter*

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And again no mosquitoes could come in. But—some *were* in; they were waiting in one half of the house. And that mosquito half of the house you might call the front of battle, if you liked to be heroic about it. Here your officer charges uphill, waving his sword, and fame comes to him who is first over the fortifications.

Here it was that Luke lay down for thirty minutes upon a bed, his chest and limbs exposed; smiling, I don't doubt, that one-sided smile of his; perhaps whistling a soft, tuneless whistle. (He was nearly tone deaf.)

So he gave himself carelessly to what he believed, and what the physicians in charge believed, to be danger of death. I see him lying at his ease, and smiling . . . and somewhere the operatic Siegfried throws aside his operatic clod of earth—

“Denn Leben und Leib,  
Seht!—so werf ich sie weit von mir!”

—and then—a mosquito is as effective as Hagen's spear.

For in due course the fever arrived,—

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### *Interventions*

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“with most unfortunate termination,” says the report. But I shall always think he would have come back, if Annabel had wanted him to. The old maid whom he called “Mater” wasn’t enough. So he died.

And I’d give something to know whether Annabel still thinks it was done out of curiosity gone mad, and that his fate was the punishment of a just and angry God. Or, doesn’t she think at all? Whatever her thoughts are, however, they move in but two dimensions. Thank God, I can think in three, even though it is at times a dreary business. But perhaps, later on—wherever it is that Luke is now—one can think in four, and in that way get at the meaning of things that seem to have no meaning now. . . . One can imagine whatever one chooses about those things. One can imagine that the truth will be something simpler and better than what we have imagined.

I had such strange dreams after Luke died—not unpleasant dreams. . . . I thought I was young again—young! I! I thought I

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*The Experimenter*

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was at the beginning of my long loneliness. (Selfishness, as I see it now. What business had I to live alone in that big house? I had a notion of self-culture, God help me!—thought I was going to write in that big lonely library with all those choice old books of my father's—so sat there forty years and did nothing. Forty years!) But in one of the dreams that forty years' mistake had not begun and I was the young girl that still expected a lover. It was dusk—just too dark to read, though I was reading to my eyes' hurt. (The "Decline and Fall," I think, for I was improving my mind vigorously.) The scent of the narcissus was very strong. And the gate-latch clicked in the old, old way . . . and it was Luke. Luke! who wasn't even born until twenty years after that. . . . And then I woke, and youth was so strong in me that I must light a candle and look in the glass before I could believe that I was old. . . . I wonder if Annabel Fraser ever dreams of him?

They know all about yellow-fever, now. He was only one of those who died to find



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*Interventions*

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out; and others who still live have undergone the same danger for the same purpose, for the world is full of courage. And in the end, I suspect, not even the Annabels matter, though they do make it hard at times for the world to get forward the way it wants to.

1881

THE  
GRAY COLLIE

1881



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## THE GRAY COLLIE

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THE steam had retired, clanking, from the radiator, withdrawing to the cellar like the dragging chain of Marley's ghost. The blue flame of a Bunsen burner was the only light and heat left. Now and then the wind flung handfuls of spiteful sleet at the window.

"I don't know anything about ghosts," said Henrietta, plaintively. "I'm as bad in psychology as mathematics. I might tell about the gray collie, but he was real. Don't let that chocolate boil over, Isabel."

Isabel poured out three steaming cups, thick and sweet, for in the young twenties and late teens the appetite is still bizarre.

"I'll tell it as it happened," sighed Henrietta. "I don't believe I could make anything up to save my neck."

She was small and sad-eyed, with a timid manner, and sat on a wolf-skin, leaning one

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### *Interventions*

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elbow on its head, which had green eyes of sinister slant, and bristling ears.

"You know who Artaxerxes was?"

"Artaxerxes," they recited, "was your old wolf-hound who was really benevolent, but everybody was afraid of him, and when he wagged his tail it waved like a cat's, sinuously, instead of swinging in a clubby, careless way, as a dog's should."

"He was white with gray spots," mused Henrietta; "I suppose his family in Siberia looked like that to match the snow when they went out hunting, and he was shaggy and soft.

"We chained him the night the circus came to town. He heard a lion roar as the train went by at three o'clock, and, at first, I thought we had another lion in the barn. Gracious! If he hadn't been chained he would have been over the wall and chased that lion to the station.

"I went down to soothe him and see if his chain had given in any of its links. I never saw him so out of temper. Finally he consented to lie down, though he grum-

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### *The Gray Collie*

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bled about it, and the tip of his tail kept twitching, not wagging. He hardly ever wagged it.

“He worried all that day. ‘Don’t you know there are bears and lions and tigers and wolves out there?’ he’d say—‘Isn’t it my business to protect you from such things? Do let me go and kill a few. I’ll come right back!’

“We supposed he would stop worrying when the circus went, but instead, he got worse. He explained how it was his business to find out what had become of all those animals. In the evenings, as soon as he was unchained, he would march up and down inside the wall, holding his nose to the wind and every now and then making a low impatient sound in his throat, as if he were worried about something and making plans.

“One morning Farmer Grosman came to our house, very fierce: ‘Your dog’s been killing my sheep.’ We explained that he never got over the six-foot wall, but nothing would do. If he hadn’t done it, who had? If we did not shoot him, he would, and so on.

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*Interventions*

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“Papa was very polite. He said he regretted that he could allow no shooting on the place except what he did himself. ‘You are certainly entitled to shoot any dog or dogs which you may discover molesting your sheep, and I shall exercise the same prerogative in protecting my dog.’

“He said it with that deprecating smile of his—I believe he smiled deprecatingly when he got cut off from his men at Antietam, and fought his way out of a lot of rebels who tried to make him prisoner. He hated Grosman, who was the meanest man in town and starved his horses.

“The man went off growling, and said he’d see the Mayor. We chained Artie up that night. In the morning we found his cat, dead, with a half-eaten piece of poisoned meat beside it. Artie thought everything of that cat. He had carried it around in his mouth ever since it was a little kitten. He always had to have his cat, the way a child has to have a doll. Any other cat he’d have sighted half a mile away and chased. But that one was his own, and anything it did

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### *The Gray Collie*

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was all right. It's all in being acquainted. Papa sat up all the next night with a shotgun. We heard that the people from the French quarter of the village insisted that Artie got over the wall at night and roamed around and got into mischief. They said they heard him howling up on Mount Phelim, and talked a great deal about what they were going to do to him and us. Those Canucks would have it that he was a man-wolf, and could change about from one thing to another. You can't argue with them, when they get a notion like that.

"One morning Pete Lancto, who mows the lawn, said he had seen the devil, and that he was like a shaggy dog.

"'Probably it *was* a dog!' I said. But he told a lot of lies about smelling brimstone and flames coming out of its eyes.

"I said 'I guess you were *tenet*' (that's their word for 'tight').

"But he hadn't touched a drop, and had only been to get a new salt codfish at the store.



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### *Interventions*

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“‘Well, anyway, if it smelt of brimstone, it wasn’t Artie.’

“But that idiot said: ‘The devil, he can smell brimstone when he wants to—*je pense que oui!*’

“So I let him alone. You can’t argue with a man who hasn’t any premises to argue from.

“It was my work to go to the village for the mail. I went after supper, about sunset, or a little later.

“The road curves along the side of Mount Phelim, which is not much of a mountain, but rather too big for a hill. When you look south it is as if the trees stood on each others’ heads, and there are wide, open spaces, like a park, so that you can see between the trunks, only by the road the underbrush is thick like a hedge. But on the north side of the road you don’t want to tumble off, for the Powasket runs below, hidden under the tops of trees, so that you only know it’s there from the sound. When I was little, I used to be afraid of that road, because a Canuck nurse-girl had scared me with stories of bears and catamounts and Indians.

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### *The Gray Collie*

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“That was why papa had me go for the mail. He never could stand cowards. At first he used to sneak along behind me, and when I got hysterical would saunter up as if he were just out for a walk, and show me how pretty the sunset was over toward Canada, or cluck for squirrels to come out and see what we wanted, or take me up into the woods a little to find Indian pipes like caryatides holding up dead leaves. So it wasn’t very long before I grew to love the walk, and the sound of the wind in the trees, even when it was dark. I got quite friendly with the squirrels, and used to leave little piles of nuts as I went to the village, and when I came back they would be all gone. There aren’t many squirrels up there that can afford pecans and Brazil-nuts. I suppose they wondered till their heads ached, why I left them around so carelessly.

“But when I grew to like it at night, papa began to object. A good many times when I’ve been sitting on the edge of the road swinging my feet over the Powasket, watching the last color going out beyond Canada,

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*Interventions*

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and listening to the owls and frogs and things, he has come to meet me and grumbled about 'going to extremes.' But I had him, you see, and only laughed. Hadn't he trained me to do it?

"So about that time he got me Artaxerxes for a chaperone, and he was a good deal of a nuisance, for the village folk disliked him from the first. When they whistled to their own dogs to get them out of his way, how could he tell they weren't calling to him? And when he'd turn to see what they wanted, they'd think he was coming after them and run, which was nonsense.

"We were keeping Artie chained that week of the sheep-killing fuss. How he hated it! When I stepped upon the horse-block to mount Pixie—I rode most of that week, and he knew I never took him when I took Pixie, because he had a nasty way of snapping at her nose, not meaning anything, but it got on her nerves dreadfully—and when I mounted Pixie and shook my crop at him, he would stand up at the end of his chain, his fore paws beating the air and his tongue

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### *The Gray Collie*

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hanging out, because he was choking himself so hard; and I've often thought he looked more unattractive that way with his one head than any picture of Cerberus with three.

"It was particularly hard on him now that his cat was dead. We had got him a new kitten, but it wasn't broken in yet, and couldn't understand that he didn't mean anything when he carried it around in his mouth.

"It was that evening that I saw the gray collie the first time. There were long streaks of late sunlight reaching up into the mountain and he was so mixed up in the light and shadow that it was only by chance I saw him at all, he was so like the tree trunks and boulders; but he happened to be in a place that I knew all about, because it was where papa and I had often sat, and I knew no gray patch of anything belonged just there. It was like finding an animal in one of those old puzzle-pictures, where they're all mixed up in the branches.

"I reined up and whistled, and called him every name I could think of, but he did not

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*Interventions*

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stir, so that I almost thought my eyes were wrong after all; but there was no mistaking those pointed ears cocked toward me. I thought he might be the sheep-killer, though he was such an aristocratic creature, for what can you expect of a dog that's lost and hungry and unhappy? I'd probably steal something myself if I felt that way. I knew that nobody in our part of the country owned such a dog as that, and I wondered if his master were dead up there on the mountain. There are so many queer accidents—but it was the close season. The more I wondered, the queerer it seemed.

“All of a sudden, Pixie snorted and plunged so that I was almost thrown, for I wasn't expecting it, and was leaning over with a loose rein and my arm out toward the collie. I had trusted that mare like my own sister, and had believed her a sensible soul, but she never stopped until she reached the barn, sweating and trembling like anything.

“I was so out of patience that I left her at home with Artie the next time I went for the mail. I planned as I went through the

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### *The Gray Collie*

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woods how I would make the collie's acquaintance and bring him home, and how he and Artie would strike up a friendship. They were both such splendid fellows and so lonely. I thought a good deal about it, how I'd manage, for I knew that if I wasn't careful they'd be more likely to kill each other first—like Balin and Balan, you know—and make up afterward.

"I didn't meet the collie until I was coming back. It was twilight, and the moon was rather narrow to see by. There was a rustle and snapping in the bushes at the side of the road.

"'Nice fellow!' I said, and stopped. I could make out the silhouette of his ears cocked toward me, and a little glimmer where his eyes were. 'Poor old chap,' I said, 'did you lose your folks?' But he wouldn't say a word, and backed off when I went toward him, so finally I went on, hoping he would follow, and he did, but slyly, so I could hardly be sure it was he, keeping beside me in the underbrush.

"When I reached the open, and looked

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### *Interventions*

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back, he was standing in a faint patch of moonlight, in the middle of the road, looking after me with his head down a little, something the way people look at you under their eyebrows when they're trying to understand.

"I whistled and called, but it was no use. He stood there as long as I did, and I finally went on without him. But I couldn't get him off my mind. It seemed such a wild, lonesome life for a dog that must have been brought up in a pleasant home, with regular meals and a fireplace to lie in front of, and probably a girl like me to take him walking. And it seemed as if it must be something queer and tragic to send him off that way by himself. I thought more and more how some young fellow might be lying dead up there on the mountain. I made up a whole story about it that evening. And that night I dreamed I had the collie and found a collar hidden in his ruff, and was trying to read his name on it—but you know how hard it is to read anything in a dream; you look at a letter and it changes to something else, or dances off to

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### *The Gray Collie*

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one side. Then he seemed to be telling me a long story, the way animals do in dreams, but when I woke up it turned into nonsense.

“I knew he would meet me the next evening, and so I took some of Artie’s dog-biscuit with me, and while the collie padded along the other side of the bushes, tried to reach some through to him, but he wouldn’t touch it, though once he sniffed a little very daintily, and then blew out his breath, as dogs do when they’ve found out all they want to know about a smell. He kept right beside me. As we neared the opening he grew bolder, frisked across the road in front and came up from the other side. As I pretended to pay no attention, he came close behind and touched my elbow, hardly enough to say so, but I felt his breath warm through my sleeve.

“When I came out into the open moonlight he stood as he had before at the edge of the woods, and watched me out of sight. I couldn’t believe that he was the sheep-killer, he seemed so gentle and timid, but I didn’t dare speak of him to any one—it would have seemed like betraying a trust—



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### *Interventions*

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for I knew that in other people's minds, if they found out that he was there, it would lie between him and Artie, and as Artie was out of the question, they would take it out in killing the collie anyhow. I felt something the way Southern girls do in novels, when they're hiding a handsome Union soldier.

"The next evening I started as usual, but just as I got to the woods, Artie came tearing after me, dragging a yard of chain and pretending he thought I wanted him! I could have slapped him, but took it out in being sarcastic, with words he couldn't understand, and hitched his chain to my belt, so that if he started to be impolite to the other fellow, I could have something to say about it.

"We reached the post-office safely enough, but I was glad he was tight to my belt, for some rough men looked at us in that ugly, suspicious way and said 'sheep-killer' once or twice, and 'loup-garou.' So I really felt safer when we reached the woods, in spite of dreading the meeting between Artie and the collie.

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*The Gray Collie*

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"But I didn't hear or see anything of him until we were half-way through, and then, so far off it might have been on top of the mountain, I heard him howl—not exactly a howl, but a queer cry, as if he were calling to something at a distance, kind of sorrowful, but fierce, too. It went down my back like a chip of ice—but I'd hardly heard it when Artie roared in answer, and I was being carried up that mountain at the end of his chain like a cart after a runaway horse.

"And I had thought I could hold him! Gracious! I tried to catch at the branches, but they broke. We went through a patch of blackberries, and there was a mucky little spring, where I fell in the mud and scared the frogs, and I think it must have been half-way up Phelim, where I finally caught tight hold of a tree trunk and my belt broke and Artie went on as if he didn't know the difference. I don't know how long it was before I got my breath and began to think. Then I heard them—away off at the top, the frogs singing between as peaceful as could be—but I heard that wicked snarling and knew

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*Interventions*

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they were at it—Balin and Balan—and that they were so well matched it was likely to be the death of both, unless I could stop it. I followed the sound and climbed after, though I was all weak and trembling. You can see on my hands now how the thorns had scratched, and my clothes were heavy and sticky with mud. It seemed ages before I got there. I think I was crying.

“I knew I couldn’t do anything, but I picked up the heaviest stick I could find, though all the sticks you can pick up in the woods are as rotten and light as powder. They didn’t seem to know I was there. They were in a little open space, and the moonlight lit up their eyes now and then. I could see that the collie was a more tremendous fellow than I had thought—and then—all of a sudden—I knew!

“And because I knew I didn’t even try to pull Artie away when he got the other fellow by the throat, and held him down, while he got weaker and weaker. I looked at him there in the moonlight, and cried, and wondered how I’d been so stupid.

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### *The Gray Collie*

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“While I sat there wringing my hands and waiting for Artie to let go, some men came up and turned a bull’s-eye lantern on me, and seemed so astonished they couldn’t do anything but swear, though each would try to shut the other up, now and then, saying there ‘was a lady present.’

“One of them seemed to think it was funny, and explained what they had said to each other, the way people always do for animals or babies. ‘Siberian wolf and Siberian wolf-hound! Must ‘a seemed kin’ o’ natural for them fellers to meet up. “Beg pardon,” says the wolf, “ain’t I seen you before?”—and says the pup, “I don’t know, but you’re certainly the chap my mammy told me to lick if ever I come acrost you, and, by thunder, I’ll do it!” Which he did. Will you be so kind, Miss, when your little terrier there has quite finished, to call him off? It’d be rayther indelicate for a stranger to interfere.’

“The other man seemed sorry. ‘Nothing left but his pelt, which is some chewed, but could be mended up into a real elegant rug,

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*Interventions*

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which the young lady might be pleased to accept.'”

Henrietta thoughtfully scratched the ears of the rug, and ran her fingers over the rows of beautiful teeth. “This is the collie.”

“But sometimes I wonder just what he had in mind when I felt his breath on my elbow. Most people would say that he was thinking how convenient I would be some evening when no sheep was handy, but I’m not sure. At the time I supposed he was sad and lonesome, and glad of my company. A wolf, after all, is a good deal of a person. He was so frightfully solitary, you see—nobody to answer his gathering cry—half a world away from his own people.”



RASSELAS IN THE  
VEGETABLE KINGDOM





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## RASSELAS IN THE VEGETABLE KINGDOM

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THE make-believe of grown people lacks both realism and romance, being merely a kind of stupid falsity that neither pleases nor deceives. The house where Rasselas lived was of this sort of make-believe, a large and splendid toy, Brobdingnagian for any house, while Rasselas was little, even for eight years old.

The floors were slippery, the rugs dim and soft, and absent-minded statues stood about in attitudes, nobody seeming to mind their being white and unfinished. When Rasselas offered to paint them with his water-colors, he was refused with empty laughter.

Had there been reality or romance anywhere, it surely would have lurked in Rasselas's play room, one would think; but a maid and a governess were there nearly all the time; the maid to keep things neat, the governess to impart useful information in



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### *Interventions*

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general, which included showing him how to play with his toys—and every one knows that this is no way to manage a play-room.

But the governess's ideas about geography were creditable. Egypt was good on account of the Sphinx and the Pyramids; so little being known about the inside of them; so many interesting things having been dug out of the sand. South America was good, too, because of the forests with animals in them. Then, if you cared to go to the North Pole, there were polar bears, the aurora borealis, and snow huts.

At that time, Rasselas still supposed himself to be one Harold Marlowe, not having discovered his right name. That knowledge came out of a book filched from the great glass cases of the "mustn't touch" library; a stiff, learned book, though with some rather interesting wood-cuts—he would never have tried to read a book without pictures—with misty trees on its shining leather covers, its leaves stuck together with gilding, proving Rasselas to be the first in that house who had read it. "Rasselas Johnson" was the name

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### *Rasselas in the Vegetable Kingdom*

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of the book, the words being written one above the other. It was the tale of a prince who lived in a certain Happy Valley, and did not like it.

On one of those days when a new nurse and a new governess were to arrive in the evening, Rasselas sat long upon the veranda, beside his mother, who was reading, and she fell asleep because, Rasselas supposed, there were no pictures in the book she read—her delicate underlip relaxed, her forehead crumpled by the ray of sunlight that lay across her eyes. She was a plump, good-natured person who, but for her toilettes and social duties, might have been cuddlesome. Then Rasselas softly departed upon a tour about the great stone wall with spikes on top, searching, in the character of that other Rasselas, means of escape from the Happy Valley, until, in that part of the grounds where the “mustn’t touch” fruits grew, he came upon a grape-vine which had hooked an elbow about one of the iron spikes of the wall, and seemed strong enough to give one a hand up.

He clutched the sharp points of the spikes,

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*Interventions*

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thrusting his toes between them, and looked upon the world as he had never done before, though he had been often out in it, riding and walking with people who eagerly told him to look at this thing and that. To really see a thing one must discover it himself.

First he considered the blue, uneven mountains, then the roofs of the town a mile away, then the half-hidden red chimney of the little house next door; and so was approaching by degrees that which was more immediately beneath him, when he was challenged, as people must expect to be challenged at the boundaries of other people's kingdoms, and his name demanded.

"Rasselas Johnson," he replied at once.

The sentry wore a white sunbonnet, and must throw her head very far back, to train the funnel on him properly. Rasselas considered the face at the bottom of the funnel, and the result of his examination was that without further parley he slipped sideways between the spikes and jumped down beside her.

She stuck out a tremulous underlip.

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*Rasselas in the Vegetable Kingdom*

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"You jumped on my moonflowers," said she. "It is the most rapid growing of all climbing vines," she recited in a voice weak with repressed tears. "Although a perennial species in the tropics (sniff), it is as readily grown from seed as any annual. The vines are literally covered with thousands of immense, pure white, fragrant flowers. Many of them measure—seven—inches—across—" The voice failed, the accusatory sunbonnet funnel turned away and was hidden in the crook of a small elbow. The sleeve was tight, and the elbow tip had worked its way through.

"There isn't any such thing," said Rasselas, looking about. Was it a game? He hardly knew what to think.

"There was going to be!"

She gesticulated backward at the print of Rasselas's hands, knees, and feet in the brown earth. Some broken, heart-shaped leaves were crushed into the soil.

"I had soaked the seeds till they were all cracked and pobby. I soaked them for days and days, and I planted them in boxes in the

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### *Interventions*

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house, and I transplanted them into little flower-pots, and then I set them out here, and then you jumped on them."

"I'm sorry," said Rasselas sadly, for he remembered now having heard that one planted seeds in order to have flowers. "I only wanted to get out of the Happy Valley."

"It isn't; it's Mr. Marlowe's place. I suppose the gardener was chasing you off, but you needn't have come down on my moon-flowers."

He had begun with romance, why not continue it? Why not reconstruct all things gloriously?

"The gardener didn't chase me. He's my uncle. I can go anywhere I like and do anything I please. I should like to play with you now."

"I was playing at working in my garden, but that's no use now."

"I know a story," quoth Rasselas, and he launched into the tale of the prince in the Happy Valley.

—"And so they went back," he finished, "into Abyssinia, because they thought they

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*Rasselas in the Vegetable Kingdom*

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ought to; but that was silly, *I* think. Why should they ought? It was nicer outside. And so they named me Rasselas Johnson out of the book, and I am visiting my uncle, who is Mr. Marlowe's gardener, and they let me do anything I want to. I have very good times," he asserted emphatically, "because I can go out of the gate and play with other children and make mud pies."

"Anybody can make mud pies."

"Master Harold can't. He's Mr. Marlowe's little boy. They don't even let him play with *me*."

While they were conversing, a long, narrow shadow had been advancing upon them silently. Rasselas was the first to become aware of this shadow, as it shot beyond them, across the perished moonflowers to the wall, and was there bent in the middle, as one bends a paper doll to make it sit down; from there on, it stood upright in the likeness of a man with a wide-brimmed hat. Rasselas and the sunbonnet funnel turned at the same instant, and she said:

"He jumped on my moonflowers, papa,

but he was in a hurry to get out of the Happy Valley."

The gentleman made no reply other than to sit down with them cross-legged, and, being a tall, thin person in a linen duster, one thought of those long-legged sand-colored grasshoppers with knees drawn up in meditation. He examined the little broken plants attentively, found one whose stem was not severed, and silently replaced it, adjusting the earth about its roots.

"Half a loaf," said he, "is better than no bread; besides, you have had an adventure, which is better still. Adventures are uncommon in the Vegetable Kingdom."

"Is this the Vegetable Kingdom?" asked Rasselas.

The little girl giggled, but not so her father.

"Part of it," he mused, his face rippling into benevolent wrinkles. "Why not? I have just been putting down an insurrection of 'pusley' in the strawberry bed. Our borders are never safe against wild carrots, and I noticed the spies of the enemy were already in the potato field."

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*Rasselas in the Vegetable Kingdom*

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These people, Rasselas perceived, understood how to play. He blushed with pleasure. "Are you the king?"

"Yes. You don't mind my not wearing a crown? I don't very often. They haven't invented a crown yet that is worth a cent to keep off the sun; and till they do, a straw hat does very well."

"You can play it's a crown."

"Yes, I can do that. Did I understand you to say you were Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia? You ought to be wearing crowns yourself, I should think, but I suppose you were in such a hurry to get out of the Happy Valley you couldn't stop for one."

He looked shrewdly at the boy, who amended with dignity—"Rasselas Johnson."

"Johnson! Of course, Johnson. You also described yourself, if I mistake not, as a young man of unusual freedom, whose temporary absence would be unlikely to cause alarm."

Rasselas looked anxious, but nodded.

The gentleman looked him over thought-



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fully. "Well," said he, "it may be that your modesty causes you to underrate your importance, or it may be—ah—in some sort, glamour—poetical license. At all events, it would seem too bad to have scaled so high a wall to no purpose and—I have seen the Happy Valley." He shrugged his shoulders and rose up—so tall that he could look over the wall when he stood on his tiptoes. "I think I shouldn't care to stay in the Happy Valley myself," he muttered, when he had so surveyed it; "let's go to the Palace. What with intriguing 'pusley' and this melancholy accident to the infant ladies-in-waiting of the Princess Inez, I think we have had enough of matters of state for one day. The Vegetable Kingdom, Prince, has its cares as well as other kingdoms, but the crown, being of straw, is not so heavy as other crowns, and the head that wears it does not lie uneasy. Although a person of the least importance, as you describe yourself, I dare say you will have to be back to tea—or dinner—but in the meantime there are milk and cookies at the Palace. Your mother wants you, Inez."

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### *Rasselas in the Vegetable Kingdom*

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The Palace was cool and dim. No queen or other royal person was in the dining-room; only two blue bowls of milk and a plate heaped with cookies. The King had announced the coming of the guest, but the Queen was too busy to bother with visiting princes that day.

Rasselas had never before seen a house like this of the Vegetable Kingdom. The floors were painted brown, and the walls a mild variation of terra-cotta. Everywhere there were book shelves, with loose papers or pamphlets inserted in the spaces left by the tops of the books—not in the least resembling a “mustn’t touch” library. Also there were divans and window seats, indicating people of leisurely habits, and many cushions, mostly grimy and out at elbow. There was a rug, with fringe singularly mutilated. A guinea-pig hitched out from under the divan and began to lunch upon this rug as soon as the children had settled down to their meal.

“He thinks the fringe is grass,” said Inez. “We are all wondering what he will do when

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### *Interventions*

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he gets through with the fringe. I don't know what we *should* do if he kept right on and ate the rug. His name is Sardanapalus."

So they took the guinea-pig with them when they went back to the garden, changing it from one thing to another as they happened to need, now an elephant and now a lion—a matter of great indifference to Sardanapalus, who, wherever you put him down, would begin to eat at once, without argument or criticism of his environment. There were few environments that Sardanapalus could not eat, but he liked green best, and picked out the clover in it first.

"Papa is a poet," said Inez. "What's yours?"

Rasselas said: "I'm a norphan, and I come from a ninstitution."

He said it rather abstractedly, for people on the other side of the wall were plainly calling: "Harold! Harold!" and among their voices Mr. Marlowe's was prominent. Soon afterward, the Marlowe carriage could be seen through the trees, driving rapidly down the yellow road.

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### *Rasselas in the Vegetable Kingdom*

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"I shouldn't wonder," said Rasselas, very calmly, "if somebody had been kidnapping that boy. They're always afraid of it. That's the trouble with being a rich child. But nobody's ever afraid about *me*."

And they went on playing until the west grew luminous and the shadows were long and purple. A bell rang in the direction of the Vegetable Kingdom Palace.

"That's my supper," said Inez. "Good-by. I will forgive you about the moon-flowers."

Rasselas inserted his head in the funnel, and kissed her warm, moist mouth. Then he stood for some time by himself, looking after her, but at length climbed over the wall by placing soap boxes on top of each other; those boxes which had been houses a few minutes before, and previously to that had contained young moonflower plants and other garden stuff.

He climbed down the grape-vine, unobserved on the other side, and took his way sombrely to the great pillared veranda of the make-believe house, where he was

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greeted with hysterical questions and kisses, and was greatly bored.

He admitted with perfect calmness that he had been kidnapped, just as they feared, by two very large men with black beards, and taken to a cave; but there his captors had fallen asleep, and he had slain them as they lay, and escaped. And to this tale he stuck with such placid satisfaction in its plausibility that in the end one or two weak-minded women almost believed him, but nobody ever knew the truth.

However, it was decided forthwith that Rasselas needed a change, and he was sent to school, and played no more at that time with the sunbonnet princess of the Vegetable Kingdom.

The full moon stood just over the south-east wall of the Marlowe place, foolish and open-mouthed.

From the big house came the tuning of violins. Rasselas—but he had forgotten that name and now thought of himself as Harold Marlowe—paced in the shadow of the wall,

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*Rasselas in the Vegetable Kingdom*

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his head downcast, sulkily unobservant of the blazing windows that laid orange patterns on the lawn, catching a flowering shrub here and there; of carriages rolling up the great curving drive; of flashes of color passing within the bright doors; of the triple thump of the first waltz—a waltz that he liked with all the sentimental soul of him, and that increased his self-pity. He halted, with his back to the wall and his hands in his pockets, pondering, after the manner of poets, about the moon, the fragrance of the shrubs, the sadness of music, and the peculiarities of his own temperament. He wondered if he dared stay away from the house for the whole evening.

Something soft and fragrant touched his cheek. Supposing it a gentle-winged night moth, he brushed it lightly aside, but as it persisted, turned and looked into the face of a great white flower, swaying at the slender tip of a vine which drooped from the top of the spiked wall. And then he saw that these ugly spikes were all softly blossoming in shimmering white under the moon,

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and straightway remembered the Vegetable Kingdom that he had once discovered on the other side, and how there were a princess, a king, and a queen who stayed in the kitchen, but fed a little visiting prince with milk and cookies. And the name of that visiting prince—Rasselas Johnson!

The grape-vine, having grown as he had grown, could still help him. He climbed up as before, cautiously stepped over the spikes, and leaped, but awkwardly, so that he came down on all fours. A scared voice said: "For mercy's sake!"—then when he had dusted his knees and apologized to an indistinct person in a white gown, who had shrunk into the great flowering vine until she might have been one of the blossoms—"I really believe you're Rasselas Johnson!" said she.

"I couldn't come back before. They sent me to school. You *are* the Vegetable Princess aren't you?"

"I'm Inez Allen, of course; but I don't think it's at all nice of you to jump over things like that."

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*Rasselas in the Vegetable Kingdom*

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"I wanted to get out of the Happy Valley."

She laughed and came out of the vine, but her retreat into it had been so hurried that she was quite enmeshed, and must work carefully to disentangle the slender branches from her hair and ruffles, without further bruising the flowers.

"Your moonflowers," said Rasselas, "have come over to my side of the wall."

"Well, you're at liberty to prune them off if you don't like them."

"I didn't say I didn't like them. If I hadn't seen them I shouldn't be here."

There was an awkward silence while they looked at each other with experimental smiles.

"You've grown a good deal," she finally said.

Rasselas bowed. "There has been time. Relatively, however, we seem to be about the same as we were then."

Inez considered the remark carefully. At last she replied: "This is perfectly ridiculous. I don't really know you at all."



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"I'm Rasselas Johnson."

"You told us you were the gardener's nephew——"

He felt that his evening dress was bringing suspicion upon him. "Oh, I am!" he said fervently. "I'm just helping the butler."

"Oughtn't you to be getting back, then?"

"No. I didn't have to. You see—that is—I won't be needed until ever so much later."

"Oh! Well, I don't mind. I came out here to listen to the music. What have you been doing all these years?"

"Why, they educated me."

"And now expect you to take a servant's place!"

"Oh, no! I just wanted to be obliging. And you have been planting moonflowers ever since?"

"That—and working my way through college. I'm just out this summer. I suppose you don't know anything about gardening? I can't decide whether to go into violets or mushrooms. There's enough land, and I won't teach—I won't!"

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*Rasselas in the Vegetable Kingdom*

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"I should think violets were nicer than mushrooms."

"It's not a question of sentiment," said Inez sharply, and sighed. Rasselas remembered that her father was a poet. Yet it wasn't very poetic for one's daughter to raise mushrooms for her living and work her way through college. He thought of his own verses guiltily. His family had been greatly bored when they appeared in the college magazines.

"I wish you knew something about gardening. I should think, being the gardener's nephew——"

"I could learn!" said Rasselas.

"You didn't think I was offering you a position, did you? I was only wishing I knew somebody that knew something. You see, our place has never been cultivated much and agricultural books are very confusing. They're so ungrammatical. Half the time they say just the opposite of what they mean."

"Inez!" called a voice somewhere in the darkness. "Inez!"

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"It worries papa to have me out when the dew is falling. Won't you come in and see him?"

Only one small light marked where lay the Vegetable Kingdom palace, so low and little among its trees that it was invisible from the third-story windows of the other palace across the way. Its walls were shaggy with vines and buttressed with shrubs. The moon, going before, hovered over its little chimney, dark against the gray-green sky. The waltz followed with plaintive inquiry and subtle lamentation, but Rasselas was no longer sad.

A white kitten tiptoed to meet them, mew-ing delicately. Against the glowing window-shade sat the shadow of a somnolent parrot, headless on its perch, and in the exact middle of the threshold the hunched backs of three guinea-pigs formed a triple arch—mother and children in silent meditation. A rather rank odor of tobacco emanated from a deep shadow under the leafy wistaria.

"It's Rasselas Johnson, papa," said Inez to the shadow. "He jumped over the wall

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again into the moonflowers and said he wanted to get out of the Happy Valley."

After which explanation Inez picked up the white kitten and sat on the steps, with her back toward her father and Rasselas, listening to the music, her thoughts no doubt on the violet and mushroom business.

The poet spoke somewhat dryly: "Good-evening, Mr. Johnson. I trust all is well in Abyssinia?"

And Rasselas stammered a little as he said that it was. He sat on the railing, facing the guinea-pigs, who stared, motionless, unwinking, the light from behind them glimmering across their six bulging eyes.

He had not been conscious of deceit before. He had supposed it was all in the way of romance. He did not like being unable to look a guinea-pig in the face, and turned the conversation as hastily as might be from Abyssinia. It gravitated naturally enough to agriculture as a pursuit for women, particularly the growing of violets and mushrooms. When the music stopped Inez turned around.

"And we could eat the mushrooms our-

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selves," she said, "if we couldn't sell them all. They're said to be very nourishing!"

Was it Rasselas's imagination, or did the light as it struck across her face show a dim depression under the cheek-bone, as if, perhaps—he burned with sudden anger—she had not always enough to eat! There had been wistfulness in that remark—"They're said to be very nourishing!"

Then he remembered how in that other time there had been a Queen in the kitchen who served out bowls of bread and milk. He dared not ask, but there seemed no hint of her anywhere now, and by and by as they talked, Inez said casually enough, though her voice was a shade softer on the phrase, "Mother used to say—" so he knew how the Queen must now be elsewhere, and that Inez must be reigning alone in the kitchen, as well as in the garden; for the King, it developed, had grown old and lame, so that in daytime he spent long hours of meditation in the sun, and on warm evenings, like this, sat silent upon the veranda. In winters, no doubt, a lamp, an open fire, his many

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### *Rasselas in the Vegetable Kingdom*

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bocks, and the same long, slow thoughts of age.

Rasselas looked at the slim Princess Inez in her white gown, with her white kitten, whose ears she was abstractedly turning inside out, and thought how it must be lonely for her.

When he had looked at her a little longer his breath quickened.

He straightened his slovenly shoulders and smiled queerly, for he guessed from the symptoms, though he was not quite sure, what had happened to him, or at least what was in a fair way to happen if he stayed much longer where he was, and got into the habit of escaping by the moonflower way out of the Happy Valley.

"There might be complications about *that*," he thought to himself. "They'd do something hateful if I married—confound it! —'beneath' me. Suppose they cut me off, for instance, would she take me on as a hired man?"

And the idea had its attractions. He also ran over in his mind a certain story about

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King Cophetua and a Beggar Maid, blushing hotly in the darkness.

Knowing his family's prejudices, however, the hired man alternative seemed likelier—and the guinea-pigs' round, truthful eyes never left his face.

So all that evening the owners of Rasselas on the other side of the wall went about their business with smiling faces, but hearts angry at this one more defection from the path of propriety on the part of the heir to the throne.

"Mooning somewhere, I suppose," his father growled to his mother, during a hurried conference.

And she, poor soul! put her handkerchief carefully to her eyes behind her fan, whispering brokenly: "To treat me so when I've tried so hard."

"You don't suppose anything's happened?" said his sister, coming up breathlessly. "Parker saw him walking out in the grounds."

"I don't care if there has," said Mr. Marlowe, and they separated, troubled and

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ashamed, to attend to their guests once more.

Inez decided to try, tentatively, both violets and mushrooms. This was the advice of Rasselas. He said, also, that he would find out everything he could from his uncle, the gardener, and bring over books.

One need not always jump over the wall. There are gates, if one cares to go so far round about. So it came to pass that Rasselas became acquainted with the conventional way of entering the Vegetable Kingdom, though he secretly preferred the other, and used it when the shelter of darkness protected him from chance gardeners.

Also it came to pass that he dreamed dreams and found an elaborately simple code of ethics in the saying about the value of a man who makes two blades of grass to grow where but one grew before. If one substituted violets and mushrooms for blades of grass, the statement gained in value beyond all argument. The Vegetable Kingdom came to mean for him those same twenty acres or



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so that it had meant years before. One played the game of life with silent plants, and found all the pleasurable excitement of living and few, if any, of its irritations.

Rasselas, under the direction of Inez, gathered the summer apples for jelly, then the winter ones to be buried in sand in the cellar, then the butternuts, hickory-nuts, and black walnuts. It was Rasselas who fashioned cold frames for wintering over the lettuce, and took down a tigerish but tender-lived rosebush from its trellis, covering it with straw and leaves.

("What have you done to your hands?" said his mother at luncheon, and received a lengthy account of a golf-ball that had flown wide into brambles.)

He tucked up the bulbs, too, in like manner, and set all things in order for their sleep, and as he wrought the Princess Inez grew more and more gracious, but somewhat shy. The King, however, walking feebly with crutch and cane, made little remark upon the work of his new ally, and, indeed, sometimes gazed at him with a vague and ques-

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### *Rasselas in the Vegetable Kingdom*

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tioning trouble, convicting Rasselas of guilt which his reason hotly denied. Yet the time must come, he knew with foreboding, when explanations would be demanded from both sides of the wall, and then—suppose he had to leave Abyssinia penniless! Put in horticultural terms, his father believed in severe pruning—had cut off already as many unpleasant things and persons as he could from his own existence. It was not at all beyond possibility that a too disobedient, always unsatisfactory son would be “cut off” if he dared too far.

And, suppose it to turn out that way, could he become enough of a gardener to justify himself in hiring out permanently to the Princess Inez? For he had no other calling by which to earn his salt, certainly.

Thus matters stood at the close of autumn, when the Marlowes were about to return to the city. All things were bare and sombre, with a hurry of gray clouds in the north, but with slanting sunlight from the south in which the first fine snowflakes had melted. The last egplantine, small, ruby red, its petals

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a bit leathery from obstinacy, but smelling of June none the less, was under consideration by Inez as Rasselas came over to say good-by.

"I go to-morrow."

"To-morrow?"

"I'll come early in the spring, you know."

She looked steadily at the hard blue mountains to the north, and unmistakable winter was in her eyes.

"We shall be glad—to have you back."

"What will you do all winter?"

"Attend to the mushrooms and violets, and do papa's typewriting."

"I've never been here in winter."

"It's not very interesting."

"If I got a chance to run up now and then, would you——"

"Be glad to see you? Yes."

Still the steady look at the mountains over which winter would presently come rushing; still that look of patience, to break a man's heart.

"Inez, if I came to you with nothing——"

Not winter, but spring, and cheeks like

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### *Rasselas in the Vegetable Kingdom*

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the one eglantine. Rasselas stammered on—his cheeks were pale—something about “Your subject—always—” He was thinking of consequences, of all he meant by “coming with nothing.”

“I don’t want a hired man,” said Inez, hysterically, “but, if you *care*——”

A slow step was approaching—an old straw hat just visible above a regiment of frost-touched dahlias.

They were not brave enough to go deliberately to meet the King, but they found courage at least to wait his coming, hand in hand. When he saw them thus, he halted, with his quiet old hands folded upon his cane, and seemed not at all surprised.

“Well, Rasselas,” he said at length, “I don’t know how this will be received in Abyssinia.”

His fingers moved restlessly, and he looked beyond the lovers to where the roofs of the Marlowe house towered into the sky.

“I have lived apart from the world so long, I have come to set values differently from the accepted manner. My ideas are not prac-

tical. If I ought to have spoken and prevented this— And yet, I had your happiness at heart.”

He sat down upon a nearby bench and leaned his chin upon the veined hands that were crossed upon his cane, while the autumn leaves played in the wind up and down the path, and his white hair fluttered on his shoulders.

“When Rasselas set out to find happiness—did he shirk anything?”

Inez looked bewildered; Rasselas hung his head.

The gentle voice pursued:

““Why should we in the compass of a pale  
Keep law, and form, and due proportion  
Showing, as in a model, our firm estate,  
When our sea-wallèd garden, the whole land,  
Is full of weeds—?””

“But!” said Rasselas, “suppose that the prince of a royal house—since we have played at figures so long—suppose he finds himself incapable even of self-government; suppose him, since his earliest memory,

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### *Rasselas in the Vegetable Kingdom*

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weighed in the balance and found, by those who understand those things, wanting. Suppose him to find a little kingdom—little, and yet great, too—that he thinks he can understand and help to govern well, and learn to govern himself in the process—and—you know how well Horace liked his Sabine farm, sir. I'm not bringing up my best argument—" he lifted Inez's hand to his lips. "I haven't exactly meant any deception. You know all about it, I see, and must have known all along."

But Inez drew away from him, and her face was white as she said: "Who are you?"

"I hardly know," said Rasselas. "Over there"—he pointed toward the shining roofs and chimneys of the great house—"they called me by a name that I didn't like, and when I was a little boy I tried to change it."

"And what is it they call you over there?"

She was standing by her father now, leaning a little, as for support, on his bent shoulders. The manner of Rasselas sank ignobly to the gloomy fretfulness of a detected thief.

"What's the use of asking that? Your

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father knew all along, and you must have guessed by now. I'm Harold Marlowe."

"The man I thought of marrying," said Inez slowly, "had a different name, and he was poor. He was different, I think, in a number of ways." And she turned toward the house.

It did not occur to Rasselas to try further self-justification. She did not glance back at all, but went slowly on with drooping head. The kitten, who had been cuffing the flying leaves up and down the path, frisked at her skirt and got in the way of her feet with careless good-humor.

Rasselas looked after her until the door closed, then drooped his head in dejected silence. On raising his troubled eyes, he was amazed and somewhat offended to find the old man regarding him with a smile that was both amused and kindly. When one has just acted out what one supposes to be his life's high tragedy, nothing cuts deeper than a spectator's smile.

"I seem to have made an ass of myself," he said.

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*Rasselas in the Vegetable Kingdom*

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“Why,” said the poet, “not so bad—no—not more than most young men. I wouldn’t worry about that aspect of it.”

“It was child’s play at first—and—this summer—I didn’t see my way to undeceive her—she liked me as the gardener’s nephew—as a man rather below her, you see, in station. I know well enough how below her I am in every way, but I was afraid that as Harold Marlowe she might not let me help—and—you can’t understand what it’s been for me—this digging around in the plants, and her showing me how to do things. ”

“Two in a garden—yes—the old plot.”

“I haven’t been posing as the Lord of Burleigh or—or Cophetua. Oh, damn it! If you don’t understand, it’s no use my trying to explain. Every word I say makes me out more of a cad.”

“I understand. Didn’t I join in your little play, when you jumped out of the Happy Valley into the poor child’s moonflower bed, destroying her little dreams and plans? I let you stay and play, didn’t I? And I let your distracted parents look for you—it did them



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no harm—" He chuckled, then by degrees grew serious and a little sad. "I think your greatest reason for the deception is the one you refrain from mentioning through delicacy—the disapproval of Abyssinia."

"Anything I do," groaned Rasselas, "is unpopular over there."

"You think you are misjudged?"

"I don't know. I have a better opinion of myself than they have of me—or I had until a few minutes ago." He looked wistfully at Inez's window, where the shade had been drawn down.

"I don't know anything about finance. To please them I tried to learn a little while ago, and blundered into a loss so heavy that—well, my father came so near disowning me then that I suppose it wouldn't be safe to cross him again. My notion was to do as I liked for once—to marry Inez and work on your farm here. It seemed as if we could be happy and as if I could make it pay, even if my father did cut me off entirely. I can reason about vegetables and small sums, even if I can't about millions and corporations

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*Rasselas in the Vegetable Kingdom*

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and all that. One may be able to recite the multiplication table and do sums in long division, and yet make a poor fist at analytics."

"Yet it seems," the poet said doubtfully, "as if there were a question of responsibility. The kingdoms of to-day, though not called kingdoms, are so none the less, and those who are born to power—well, there was a king who, during a battle, sat still and envied the shepherds. Doubtless he would have made a better shepherd than king, and yet, being a king——"

"Being what he was, he ought to have resigned, abdicated—don't you think, sir?"

"Oh, what a pity is it

That he had not so trimmed and dressed his land  
As we this garden——"

said the poet.

"There are so many," sighed Rasselas, "who can trim and dress it better than he can; his younger brother, for example."

The poet went on: "I lived in a Happy Valley once, and I shirked it in something

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### *Interventions*

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the way you want to do; but, then, you aren't a poet—are you?"

"No, indeed!" said Rasselas eagerly.

"And perhaps to be happy is a duty, though the moralists don't teach so, and, as you say, this little farm is big enough to be happy in—if that were all. Big enough for you and Inez, as it was for me—and—another."

"But you heard what she said just now. It's all over. There's no use in argument."

"No, not in argument, but it may not be all over. Go back to Abyssinia for awhile and think it over. Make sure, too, whether you have a duty there that you are shirking. I think Inez had some notion about that."

"If only you won't send me away forever."

"No, not forever."

The snow was sodden and unwholesome in the hollows between bare ridges and hummocks, and a tremendous wind boomed in the naked trees. It was dark and rainy, neither spring nor winter, desolate beyond all other seasons.

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The poet lay back in a Morris chair, his feet on a tabouret, pillows tucked under him at every possible angle, a gay Afghan over his long, thin legs. Breathing had become a serious matter with him which he was in haste to be done with as soon as might be. He seemed listening as if for some other sound than the wind, and watched Inez anxiously and furtively as she prepared his gruel over the coals in the fireplace.

"Inez."

"Yes, dearest."

"Mustn't—make—too much—of things that don't really matter. Sometimes—it's—better not to hold too rigidly to principles—they may be—only—prejudices."

"Oh, papa, dear—surely right is right."

"Not always." He smiled whimsically. "I can't argue, though—now—you'll just have to accept—my conclusions."

"Don't ask me to forgive him, papa."

"Forgive—no. Stevenson says he doesn't know what—forgiveness is. There isn't any such thing."

"You've made me burn your gruel, dear."

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### *Interventions*

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I'll make some more, and you mustn't talk to me about him this time."

"I must talk—while I can. Wasn't that a step on the porch?"

"It was the wind. Nobody would come in such weather."

"Inez—" he raised himself up with difficulty and looked at her imploringly—"take what life offers—*when* it offers. Don't let happiness pass by for the sake of a whim. Happiness is a duty when it comes. It doesn't often come—not real happiness. I'm sure some one knocked."

"The wind has knocked all day, but I'll make sure." The knock was unmistakable this time. At first it had been timid, but was imperious at last, and when she opened the door the wind and rain entered noisily, but with them a young man, wet and stormy as young Spring itself, who threw his arms about her and kissed her.

And it was rather astonishing, if one thought of the manner in which she had dismissed him, how quietly her hands clasped together behind his neck, and

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*Rasselas in the Vegetable Kingdom*

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how meek her pale face was under his kisses.

“Did papa send for you?” she said at last.

“Yes. But I was ready to come anyway.”

“Perhaps he is right. Come in and talk to him while I make his gruel.”

“Good evening, Mr.—Johnson,” said the poet tremulously. “I trust all is well in Abyssinia?”

“You will be pleased to know, sir, that I have made my peace with Abyssinia to such an extent that I can do as I like in the matter of most importance to me. I am cut off with a shilling at my own request, and the shilling is of moderately generous proportions.”

Inez brought the gruel.

“I hope you aren’t hungry,” smiled the poet; “if you are, I’m afraid you’ll have to put up with gruel. We’ve got out of the way of eating much else of late. I can’t, and Inez is too lazy to cook just for herself.”

“There’s bacon,” said Inez, shyly, “and eggs, I think. The hens were cackling this morning. and it won’t take long to make biscuit.”

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*Interventions*

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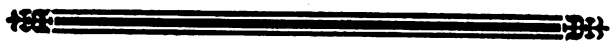
"I'm more hungry for this than anything else—" Rasselas kissed her again—eyes, hair, and mouth, while her father smiled approval.

And the storm blustered savagely at doors and windows; but people who are contented with gruel, bacon, and eggs, and each other, are not troubled by such matters.

Once the poet, turning his dim eyes upon the trickling panes, observed cheerfully: "This is a real spring rain."

No one replying, he intelligently regarded the two cooks who were manipulating the frying-pan over the coals, and making sad work of that frugal dinner by reason of their happy absent-mindedness.

"Without doubt, happiness is a duty," he said softly.



# M A R T H A







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## M A R T H A

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IT was after eleven, but Martha still sat up with her bread. A dozen loaves already stood on end shawled in napkins that were spending their last threadbare days in this service. A big pot of beans crowned with a slice of pork waited to go into the oven for the night as soon as the present occupants of it should vacate. Then Martha would go to bed. Meantime she darned stockings.

Her thoughts were partly occupied with the wonders that would be possible in the way of cooking when the double-ovened range arrived; but not altogether. The shadow that had lain in her honest eyes for a year could never be quite dominated by any other thought than itself, however material and of the moment. On sunny mornings, when she sang about her work, the shadow was at its smallest, but when she sat up late and darned stockings it invaded the room,

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*Interventions*

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filtering in with the night, and spreading until it well-nigh put out the cheerful baking fire and the courage of her own heart.

It was early October and the faint sour reek of a distant cider mill entered through a window which gave upon sloping miles of apple country. The night was warm for the season, and so still that you could hear—just barely hear—a faint murmur, very far off; not the drone of a city, but like that in pitch and in never ceasing. From another window opening to the south, Martha could see the light of a city upon the sky, and this, for size and steadfastness, balanced, in a way, that murmur out of the north. The Light and the Sound were to Martha manifestations of the eternal and solid universe, the one as enduring as the other and as the stars—not that she often thought much about them. But to-night, between the two there seemed to be mention made of last Sunday's text, and a further amplification of that fiery sermon which, dwelling long upon the wickedness of the strike and longer still upon the wickedness of Governor Van Ness

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### Martha

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in calling out the troops to suppress it, had ended nowhere except in a passion against all men.

For the trouble which had so excited the futile little clergyman lay under that calm light in the south.

*"Woe to the multitude of many people,"* he had fumed, and the big Falls, she fancied, were preaching the same sentiment across the night to that troubled city at the south, but calmly and methodically, not at all in the manner of the angry minister.

*"Woe to the multitude of many people,"* whispered the Falls, as they plunged eternally down over the edge of the darkness, *"which make a noise like the noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters!"*

Sometimes as she darned the stockings her lips mechanically repeated the words; sometimes her hands fell idle in her lap while her troubled glance sought the window.

Somewhere under the lamps that cast that light upon the sky lived and toiled and tempestuously thought John Bailey. Trouble

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*Interventions*

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had begun for the Baileys when their farm was swept away by debt. Then John, though he was ready for college, had to take the first thing he could grasp, which had been a place in the shoe factory. This disappointment, of itself, had been a good deal of trouble for a boy, but more had come when his sister went to New York to take a three-dollar-a-week place in a department store. Nobody ever knew what had happened, but within the year John had suddenly to go to town—perhaps it was a despairing letter, perhaps some roundabout rumor. She was dead, he said, when he came back; and that was all. But from this time had dated his strange ideas. How it was that he blamed the Government and the rich people generally for all his troubles was never clear to Martha, although he read aloud to her from excited-sounding books in support of this position. It seemed, moreover, there was a set of men in the factory who had some kind of club where these matters were stormily debated. There were foreigners among them, Martha learned with apprehension. Foreigners, to

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## *Martha*

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her thinking, were men without religion, savagely whiskered, and unclean.

According to John's new philosophy nothing was right in the whole world. It was wrong to own land, it was wrong to pay taxes, it was wrong to inherit money. The climax came when he began to explain that marriage also was wrong.

Martha's father was quite deaf, but for many an evening, with growing disapproval, he had been silently reading the young man's nervous lips. Now he put a hollowed hand behind his ear and insisted on having this last dictum shouted into it, that there might be no mistake. This done, he rose to his six feet three of tremulous dignity and told John to go away. And John had gone, and never had come back, even to claim the moonstone ring that he had given Martha before he came to disbelieve in marriage.

But Martha could never quite get him out of her head in spite of his wicked notions. Always she must be dreaming of his coming back and having need of her, and when she sat up late with her work she would

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*Interventions*

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always be listening for that rapid, uneven step.

To-night, at last, it came.

She turned very pale and let her work fall to the floor. It was far down the road, with a kind of dragging hurry about it, but so robbed by excitement and fatigue of its individuality that she could hardly be sure it was John's step until the thorns and withered leaves of the rosebush at the window were thrust aside, and his face looked in, streaked with blood and dust that did not hide its pallor.

"Martha!" he whispered, "Martha!"

And she quietly unfastened the door and led him, staggering and leaning heavily on her shoulder, to the kitchen. He fell full length on the wooden settee—a slight, ill-built young figure. Martha's eyes as her large cool hands busied themselves with the blood and dust, were as the eyes of a woman who looks at her first-born. She bound up the cut whence the red stain had come, then brought her rocker nearer and waited for him to speak.

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*Martha*

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"Van Ness is shot," said he.

"The Governor!"

"Governor Van Ness—and he'd have been President this fall."

"You saw it done. . . ." A sharp memory of his wild, threatening monologues brought her to her feet. "Are they after *you*?"

He sat up on one elbow looking at her with vague trouble, but nothing worse.

"Not yet, I think. I dare say they may be when they find how thick I was with Ivan—" He pondered for a moment, then lay down again with a gesture of indifference, "What do I care! . . ."

"Martha, I've had a queer time since your father packed me off a year ago. I've been a reporter. A reporter sees the queerest things there are in the world. You get reconstructed someways—but first you get all smashed to pieces and don't know where you're at. *Then* you get reconstructed. I'd hardly thought of you till to-night—then it seemed I couldn't remember anything else. So I came to find you. . . . Tell your father I haven't any ideas any more of any kind whatever. That



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### *Interventions*

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ought to suit him. If you have any, perhaps you'll share with me, but I'm done."

Martha understood little more of this incoherent speech than that he wanted her back after all. She leaned over and kissed his forehead, happy in spite of the great man who lay tragically dead somewhere beneath that light in the south, though she gave him the tribute of a sigh, and said:

"Papa will feel it terribly. I guess he thought the world turned around Van Ness. He was going to be driven to the polls to vote for him."

"Yes. There's lots of people will feel that way. I'd been going to vote for him myself, and if he could swing *me* around"—this with a savage flash of his old pride—"he could 'a done most anything.

"I'm going to tell you about it—and about me. Sometimes things take shape better from hearing yourself talk.

"I thought a year ago that if you set about it right you could fix up all the wrong things in the world. I think so still, but I thought then I knew *how* to set about it. Now I'm not

sure. I guess it isn't the laws nor the rich people that ails us. I expect it's something that goes deeper. You'd think if people would only reason a bit and half try to be decent to each other it would work out right. But there it is. They can't. Not that you can blame 'em for being blind and deaf. . . .

"And if people are really so stupid that they'll queer anything that's done for them, why, it isn't industrial conditions that make the trouble. Those fellows that lectured at our club here said the laws were wrong. I couldn't say no to that, with old McLean stealing the farm out from under our feet. . . . And now I'll tell you about Sally. I've never told anybody else but Ivan.

"Well, when I found her in New York, that time, it was in the morgue. . . . That's where three dollars a week brought her, and *you* know she was as good a girl as ever lived. I made up my mind right there that something was wrong with this world—something big, and when these fellows talked dynamite, I thought maybe it would take something big and plenty like dynamite to fix it. I was with

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*Interventions*

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them. I don't know where I am now, but I was with them then.

“At least it seemed important enough to make it worth while trying the experiment of killing a few kings and millionaires just to see what the effect *would* be. Didn't seem as if it could be worse—and when I thought of Sally's three dollars a week, and the morgue, I didn't feel very tender of other people's feelings. There was never a rich girl prettier and smarter than Sally, never one of 'em that was more fit to survive. Survival of the fittest be damned! Talk that to a man who's spent most of his life hoeing corn and potatoes. Leave your farm to fight it out with the weeds and then see what's fit to survive. You'd have some rag weed, I shouldn't wonder—and poison ivy and bent grass—and that's about the way it is with people. I've seen a garden rose that had got lost somehow, trying to live with big stinking cat-briers twisted around it. That was about like our Sally when she got to the city, I guess. . . .

“I met Ivan just after I got back from

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New York when I was hot and cold all over, and wild to do something. He was a little quiet chap and lame. He had got hurt when all his family but him and his father were killed by a party of Cossacks—just for fun, I guess. The sort of fun we read about Indians having with settlers. His father had been away somewhere, and when he got back and counted up the corpses—there was one he couldn't find. He'd have been a lot happier if he could. It was the oldest girl . . . Ivan wasn't dead, but he was crippled.

"Well, old Kosek gathered up Ivan and managed to get out of Russia. They brought up in the Chicago stock-yards. By the time Ivan could read and write American, his father was dead.

"Then Ivan did some begging and some stealing and finally got a job running a little hand sewing-machine in a sweat-shop. But he had a good brain, and the whole of it was taken up with the one idea: "Who's to blame, and how can I get at 'em?"

"His father had never talked about anything else, I guess, except the things that had

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### *Interventions*

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happened to him in Russia. Chicago he had seen for himself, and he read every last brimstone anarchist pamphlet he could get hold of. He would translate 'em to us at the club and go one better out of his own head.

"We used to put him up on the table, crutches and all, for the fun of hearing him lay it on—he was such a fierce little beggar. It was vaudeville for most of 'em. But I wasn't feeling funny. It struck me he was mostly talking sense. And one night we walked home together and he told me about his family, and the sister that couldn't be found, and I told him about mine that I *had* found. After that we were chums. . . .

"He was as kind a little chap as ever breathed; he'd spend his last cent on a bone for a lame dog. . . .

"It's a bad thing to have just one idea, and not be able to see beyond or around it. 'Who's to blame, and how can I get at 'em?' . . . Well, he had his notions about who was to blame. I began to notice after awhile that he had business somewhere else besides at our club. I saw him once or twice with queerer

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## *Martha*

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looking chaps than himself and was glad he'd found friends. He seemed to be picking up, too, like a man that's in luck, but he never said what it was, and I had plenty to think of. I was in luck, too, for about that time I got my reporter's job in the city. After that I didn't see him for awhile. . . .

"Now, what struck Van Ness to come smash into the strike on his electioneering trip? It was like him, though. He was the sort of man to go across the world on foot to find a man or a thing that was specially dangerous to him. I can see him walk up to a lion—'Beg pardon, but I thought I heard you roar. Were you addressing me?'—and the lion would go away. . . .

"'Camp on his trail,' says the city editor to me; 'there'll be a big story, I shouldn't wonder.'

"I stood in the station crowd when his train came in, and I kept at his heels all day yesterday, and I heard what the crowd said—grumble, grumble, grumble, and sassing the soldiers when they made 'em clear the road. Along toward evening as I was going

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### *Interventions*

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down Market Street I saw a lame chap ahead of me that looked familiar, and slapped him on the back. It was Ivan. He wheeled around, fierce, then said: 'Oh, it's you,' and put back his little knife, like a cat drawing in its claws, and we went and had a drink. 'Well,' I said, 'you're looking pretty jolly. Are you in luck?'

"'The best in the world!' said he, looking like a stained-glass angel, and I thought it was a girl and wished him joy. . . . He smiled in his quiet way. . . . I thought it was a girl! . . .

"It was up to me to interview Van Ness that evening. I got him at the stage entrance before he went on to the platform to make his little speech. 'Got anything to say about the strike, Governor?' I said. 'Nothing but what I'll say to everybody to-night,' said he, and then: 'What do *you* think?'

"That was Van Ness. He always interviewed his interviewers. Turned them upside down and shook out the crumbs.

"Well, I had thought I had ideas, but it hit me somehow, as he looked at me, that

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*Martha*

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square way, that here was a man who had done more thinking than I had. *He* was none of your greasy, mealy-mouthed politicians. He was a *man*. He could have said: 'Do this,' and even I would have gone and done it without a word, and I'm not over obedient.

"'I don't know, sir,' I said, and then, remembering things I'd heard: 'The men are pretty ugly, sir. I hope you'll be careful.'

"'There are different ways,' said he, giving me a cigar, 'of being careful. Didn't it ever strike you that there are a whole lot of things more valuable than life? As to the strike, my boy,' said he, 'I'll answer you—not your paper. It isn't altogether a matter of right and wrong,' said he, 'not many things are. Nobody knows anything for sure. A man must do his duty as he best sees it. Some people might tell you to leave the rest to God. Perhaps that's as good a way to put it as any other.' He put his hand on my shoulder. 'You young men,' said he, 'you young men—I wonder what you'll make of it.'

"Then one of his heelers came after him to go in front, and I cut around to get the



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*Interventions*

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speech. And half were clapping and yelling, but of the rest some were glum and some hooted. . . . I guess I got the speech all right. It'll be in the paper. . . . Lord! it seems queer! He seemed so alive. I was thinking there wouldn't be such a mess if all the presidents and czars and kings were that kind, and I made up my mind to vote for him, principles or no principles.

"After the speech the band struck up, and the people formed in line to shake hands with him. The place was gay enough with flags and gilt eagles and flowers. I got in line with the rest, partly because I might see or hear something funny that I could write up, and partly because I kind of liked the idea of shaking hands with the old boy. As I took my place I saw Ivan ahead of me, but there was a German beer keg between us, so I couldn't nudge him. I thought 'twas singular a chap with Ivan's notions should be taking all that time and trouble to give the glad hand to a bloody oppressor, but decided he might have been quieting down a bit like me. I planned I'd guy him about it when I got

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*Martha*

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him outside. Probably, I thought, his girl had given him a change of heart.

“But just as he was stepping up for his turn it came to me sick and sudden that Ivan couldn’t possibly change; that I’d been an ass, and that there could be nothing but mischief when Ivan Kosek wanted to shake hands with a big man in a big office. So I tried to climb over the Dutchman—it was too late. . . .

“My Lord! Martha! There lay Van Ness . . . and the noise of the shot had knocked me deaf and silly, and they were hustling Ivan and hitting him with his own crutches the way people beat a mad dog to death, and the soldiers closed in and hustled the people that were pounding Ivan. Van Ness he raised up—

“‘Bring him here,’ said he, and they brought him up all bloody and not able to stand without his crutches. Van Ness tried to say something—what do you think he got out?—‘Poor boy!’ says he, ‘poor boy!’

“Then his head dropped on his shoulder, the way I’ve seen Sally go to sleep when she

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### *Interventions*

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was a kid, and a solemn-looking doctor, after a minute more, took the flag that had draped the speaker's stand and spread it over him. . . .

“And all this time the soldiers were busy keeping the people off from Ivan.

“I went with the crowd. Looking back I saw a big fat general with his red face all screwed up like a kid that's crying; but so far as concerned what was covered up by the flag I felt I was done, and now 'twas Ivan's turn. Of that I saw all I wanted to and more—and more. Not that I'd have missed it. I climbed up on a lamp-post and looked over the shoulders of the soldiers as they dragged him by. Something made him look my way. He saw me and managed to move his hand for hello and good-by. He hadn't lost his stained-glass angel look. He was such a little chap. . . .

“But when they saw it was me he was waving at, the officer halted his men and started to get me too. Ivan was popular with some in the crowd, though; mighty popular—damn 'em!—and somebody grabbed me

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*Martha*

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from behind and hustled me down a side street. . . .

"I didn't send in any story about it, so there goes my job. . . . The world has all gone queer. What did the news matter, or my job, or anything else? Then I remembered you. I thought maybe you'd be still sitting up and working in the same old way—I came to find out—and here you were. . . ."

"Yes. I've been here ever since," said Martha, wiping the tears from her cheeks with her apron. "It has been an awfully long time," she added.

"I suppose you wouldn't want to marry me—after all?" he asked.

"Why, of course," answered Martha. He sighed a deep breath like one who lies down to sleep after a fatiguing day.

"And that's queer, too," he said. "But I guess I'm done theorizing. I'll take things as they come."

"Well," said Martha, "I don't blame you so much for thinking the way you did. I got to thinking myself, last winter, when things

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*Interventions*

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went bad here. I worried about you a lot. I didn't know what you might get into. I thought maybe I was to blame for not going with you, the way you wanted me to," she blushed hotly, "but then, I thought, what would become of the children here, and father? I'd been getting rather slack about the work, and the more I let things go the worse I felt, so I braced up and did the best I could. It made a difference.

"I saw them happier, and I thought, well, that's something. I know I'm accomplishing something here. Perhaps so long as one is sure of that one ought to stay where one has been put. Perhaps that's what the Governor meant by what he said to you about duty—if you're sure you're doing right you don't worry."

"Ah, but Ivan thought he was doing his duty——"

"Yes. Queer, isn't it? I don't believe we can unravel it very well into right and wrong. Do we—do we have to try? Isn't it better for you, just as it was for me, to find something that'll keep us very busy, and be of some use to other people?"

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### *Martha*

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John's big and unwieldy brain considered the wisdom evolved by her simpler one, and, as he thought, he took her muscular hand in his and studied it as though some answer were written in its work-worn lines.

He looked for a long time in the same way at her kind face, and with something more than a lover's desire. He was putting this and that together to evolve from his experience an abstract law. But it refused to formulate itself. Instead, his conclusions ranged themselves in the form of the three faces which stood out from the turmoil of the day. He wondered if the third did not in some way offer a solution of the problem stated by the other two. Martha spoke:

"I'll try to be a good wife," said she humbly.

In these commonplace words of self-forgetfulness and service he detected something which he could not put into form, but which seemed to hold the solution he desired, not only for himself, but for the turmoil in the city and for all other troubles. Laying his face in her kind young hands, he felt his

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*Interventions*

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wild thoughts departing from him, and, notwithstanding the confusion under that quiet glow in the south and the insistent warning mutter of the Falls, was aware of that other allegory of green pastures and still waters. And if the rushing nations must, as the Lakes do, plunge over a Niagara during some portion of their infinite journey, still that is only an incident and not the end of things, for the rushing waters become the navigable St. Lawrence, and after that there is the ocean, where great ships go safely enough about their grave affairs.

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E. HOLBROOK'S  
PATIENCE

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## E. HOLBROOK'S PATIENCE

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IN those years when I still read but stiffly I came upon files of our magazine in the attic and copied its ugly woodcuts with my pencil, wetting the point to make the lines black, thus entering upon that road which eventually led me here, not dreaming then of anything so exalted as that I should one day be a part of its august "We"—and find it as prosaic as any other calling.

For some of us here, whatever respectful notion you of the outer darkness may have—and the more respectful it is, the better—look back at our student days, when we planned to be artists or writers ourselves instead of mere rulers of such, with timid and wistful respect; an attitude which we do *not* take when dealing with other men's student days and the product thereof.

Since those dusty garret files were printed "We" have wonderfully progressed, even

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*Interventions*

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going into colors, but conservatively, as we try to do everything, taking pride in our dignity and taste. Probably among the thirty-five-cent magazines we rank as well as the next. The Solemn Ass who writes our advertisements puts us first, of course, but I am only assistant art editor, and not obliged to commit myself on that point.

The door of which the gray glass panel is severely lettered "Private" opened cautiously and the Great Mogul, peering timidly around its edge, beckoned me—who hope to be Great Mogul myself some day, if I am good.

Entering, I found him, his tumultuous gray hair rather wilder than usual, training his spectacles upon a thick pile of undersized color studies, which he pushed toward me with an inarticulate inquiring monosyllable.

First I took stock of his handsome old profile, to make out, if I could, his own opinion.

"Unusual, at least," I ventured.

But the word fell short, some way. He impatiently made to push them aside for the

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*E. Holbrook's Patience*

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lady-who-sends-things-back to take care of, but, hesitating over a study of gentians among ripe grasses, a distant veil of wild asters indicated between their tips, he forgot his purpose and moment's crossness.

"One of those self-taught chaps," he said mildly. Usually he is such an irascible old Mogul when it comes to artistic matters that I hardly knew how to take his leniency toward these labored drawings. Without rancor he indicated the painful stippling.

"It seems a pity. There are fifty-two of these. He calls them 'The Meadow's Calendar.' A manuscript in twelve sections goes with them. He offers it as a serial. . . ."

"Pathetic, nervy, and *not* unusual," said I.

He shook the ashes from his brier on the Bokhara rug we gave him last Christmas, refilled it, and went through the iron-hard little studies again with an unhappy expression.

"Of course we have to be hard-hearted here, or we should perish in a week, but—we needn't overdo it."

He creaked backward in his revolving

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## *Interventions*

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chair, folded his feet on the desk among drawings and proofs, and with his fingers combed his mighty hair in a few more directions.

"You know, this sort of thing is done with blood and in solitude. It's like the Oriental carving that a lifetime goes to. I—I shall put it in the personal-letter class, anyhow. . . . There's no harm in advising him to study—telling him, perhaps, a few elementary things. . . . If, when I wish I hadn't, you pipe up, 'I told you so,' you may look for another job."

I grinned evilly. As I closed the "Private" door, I heard the chirr of the bell summoning the stenographer to take down that encouraging letter to the perfectly hopeless—as I believed—"E. Holbrook."

You see, it's this way: Some morning when you are feeling optimistic on general principles, you find something promising on your desk, and write encouragingly to the perpetrator of it, telling him he ought to study—meaning just that and no more.

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*E. Holbrook's Patience*

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And the misguided wretch immediately pawns his watch to come to New York and talk to you about it. You inventory his bright, greedy eyes, his low collar, his high-water pants. Sorrowing and remorseful you take him to your club, where he tells you, and some other man who comes over to find out where you got It, about his Soul, how different it is from all other souls, and why. And after he has hung around for a week and you are wearily sure that he never, never can "make good," you buy him a ticket back to his photograph-coloring establishment and resolve to be more careful next time.

At least, that had been my experience soon after I became art editor's assistant—but then I was younger than the Mogul, and intoxicated, of course, with my new power over my fellow-man's ambitions. Now that my superior officer was about to lay himself open to the same thing, I was naturally filled with peaceful content.

It was our custom when we had accumulated more drawings than our shop would

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### *Interventions*

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hold to have an exhibition and an auction, using for that purpose the Milton-Jannsen Galleries—all in sage green, very *recherché*.

The first room was given over to Horton's frontispieces and covers in color. He was our bright and particular star, and had treated us well until we put him on a salary. Then, of course, there was trouble—but that is neither here nor there. It had got so bad at this point, however, that he was not on speaking terms with the Mogul or me—as if *we* were responsible for the presswork!

He was the first person I saw, dressed like a tramp, admiring his own work. I went to the other side of the room, pretending not to see him. It was good work, and I wasn't going to be bluffed out of having a last look at it before the dealers got it. And here the Mogul found me, having sought, he said, all over the place. He looked worried; his cheeks were red above his gray whiskers.

"I want you to meet Miss Holbrook," he said.

I had forgotten, by that time, all about "E. Holbrook," or only kept him in the back of

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*E. Holbrook's Patience*

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my mind as an agreeable possibility of embarrassment for my chief, and none of my funeral. Certainly there was nothing to suggest him in the thin, small, gray-haired person in mourning who smiled kindly at me as she put out a black-gloved hand. "Some relation," I thought, "of whose monopoly he is not stingy." For he had at once fled, with confused mutterings about an engagement.

Having in mind the liking of the laity for bright color and big canvases I took her to Horton's display, but after looking them carefully over she had the good taste to express greater interest in a decoration done by the Great Mogul's assistant, whose opinion of her opinion rose considerably thereupon, and I looked at her for the first time with attention. Her profile, shadowed by hat and veil so that the fine wrinkled network at her eye corners was blotted out, betrayed the pleasant information that twenty years ago her face had been one to make you sit up. After studying it a while longer I decided that it might have that quality still. Wrinkles



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### *Interventions*

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and gray hair do have it, now and then, if you know how to look.

I am good at drawing people out. Now, turning upon her the battery of all my subtle processes, I gathered that when a girl she had once studied for a time in New York, had been called back to support her family, teaching art in a wretched little seminary in her native town, had stayed there ever since, but somehow had kept the breath of life in what must have once been overwhelming ambition. Now, after serving longer than Jacob for his Rachel, having found herself a free-lance, she was trying to take up matters where she had left off a quarter of a century since. Referring to her buried youth, she said:

“Young people are not patient. They think that life is both shorter and longer than it really is. When you get older and the shortness of it ceases to give you stage fright, you see how there is time for everything you really want, after all.”

With this she turned her smile full upon me, and at first I thought, “How young!”

then, "That's not youth! That's the old age of Isis and the Sphinx—of inorganic things that can't grow old—oceans and mountains."

"The opinion seems to be," she made a query of the assertion, "that one must study with a master and while one is young; that one can't expect, these days, to mine things out alone?"

"A strong personality," I admitted, very liberally, as I thought, "with tremendous patience can do almost anything. Training saves time though, and those that succeed without it, perhaps with it would have gone further."

She appeared to turn this over carefully; then with a shy smile:

"I've sent things to your shop—perhaps you know? Mr. Hardbecker thought at first that I was a young man. He was very kind about advising me to study. I didn't undeceive him until—well, until to-day. I wanted the advice, you see, even under false pretences. He doesn't know what to do with me now—" She laughed a little sadly.

Then I understood what that disturbed

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### *Interventions*

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look on Hardbecker's face had meant. This was "E. Holbrook" of the ponderous "Meadow's Calendar"! This was the youthful genius he had been encouraging! To-morrow I could say, "I told you so," and my own disgrace would be wiped out by his greater one.

"He advised you to come to New York?" I said in that deferential, interested way of mine which is so effective in drawing people out.

"He advised it—provided I had independent means." She left me to infer that her means *had* been independent; then, eagerly, "How long can a tendency lie dormant without being atrophied? I've never *felt* as though it atrophied. Perhaps they over-estimate youth. There was a grain of wheat once found in the wrappings of a mummy. It had waited thousands of years, but it grew as soon as it was planted."

As she spoke the illusion of youth brightened—the youth that was not youth. Searching for a figure, I was pleased with a comparison to late-blooming plants, asters and golden-rod, or those pompon chrysanthemums.

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*E. Holbrook's Patience*

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mums that blossom in the snow—growths that spend a long inconspicuous green life of preparation out of which they burst young and glowing when everything else is shriveled. Yet I did not believe in her ultimate success. I went no further than a desire to believe in it. But even at the best, there is something arid in that sort of life—for a woman at least. She was such a delicate, feminine little creature to spend her days in the cold north light of Art. Embroidering sofa pillows and presiding at a dinner table seemed more in her line.

The Great Mogul came in one day with dark-blue glass in one of his spectacle eyes. He was in an outrageous temper during the forenoon. After luncheon he was more resigned but still somewhat sour. I'd known for some time that his eyesight was not what it ought to be. When an artist's eyes begin to go, he's done forever. Deaf musicians aren't so badly off. Beethoven was deaf and wasn't spoiled, but look at some of Du Maurier's latest work! Of course if he can write—but

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artists for the most part make great hash when they try to be literary. And so, when I saw the blue glass, I knew that it was all up with the poor old Mogul.

That afternoon another package from E. Holbrook was handed in. The same thing she had sent us before, "The Meadow's Calendar," only done larger and looser. Not a single idea of the original had been given up!

"Good nerve," I said. The Mogul smiled and put them aside for the lady-who-sends-things-back to take care of.

"Not yet," said the Great Mogul. "I'll write—". He put his hand to his eyes, and flung out impatiently, "No, you do it. Tell her—tell her that she is improving."

But when I had obediently written, he changed his mind. "No, better ask her to call at the office."

She came, wearing the same gown I had seen her in before. And she was paler and thinner. I felt cross. "Well," I thought, "if people *will* come to New York to make their fortunes, without any fortune to begin on,

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they must expect to go hungry. It's none of my funeral."

The young look was in her eyes still. She didn't seem a bit discouraged. And that made me crosser than ever. If people are cowardly and beg for sympathy, you feel that they're not worth sympathy, and you can be hard-hearted with a good conscience, but I always did hate that Spartan boy who let the fox chew his vitals while he grinned and pretended that he had never seen a fox. I wondered if the Mogul was too blind to notice.

It was a long time before he bowed her out of the glass door. She was laughing as she came out:

"Why, if you don't mind, I'd like to try it a third time, then; but I don't want to be a bore."

He assured her that he should be only too happy.

"And if you don't take it the third time"—just a shadow of weariness crossed her face at the supposition—"why, then—I rather think I'll work on it through the summer—making fresh studies, you know, from the

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### *Interventions*

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flowers. Of course, I've been sketching from them all my life, but I've learned so many little things this winter, just from seeing other people's work—it will be pleasant to do it over again, and apply all I've learned."

And then I showed her to the elevator.

"Three times, and out," I said to the Mogul as I came back. "Will she make it, do you think?"

He growled some malediction upon me and the magazine and the world in general—I couldn't make out whether he included Miss Holbrook or not—and banged the "Private" door so it was a wonder the glass didn't shatter.

About the last of May back came that "Meadow's Calendar," as she had promised. I was doing most of the Mogul's work by this. He hardly got around oftener than once a week, but when the Calendar came I left it for him, though I knew there was no hope for it, thinking it might amuse him. He looked the drawings over, blinking his red-lidded eyes. Both eyes were behind blue glass now.

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*E. Holbrook's Patience*

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"Ask her," said he, "to come to the office," and he did not put the drawings among those to be returned. Feeling my astonishment—"I'm not going to keep them," he snapped, "but I'm going over them with her—it would be only decent."

She came, pale and threadbare; there was a little strangeness in her smile now, an ethereal quality, like the smile of a nun that has prayed too long and seen the Grail—Percival's sister, wasn't it? I happen to remember that quotation because it's one where Tennyson rather overdid it—

And so she prayed and fasted, till the sun  
Shone, and the wind blew, through her, and I thought  
She might have risen and floated when I saw her—

I cast about how I could manage to get her to lunch with me without letting her guess that I thought she might vanish if she didn't, but he got ahead of me. When they passed through my cage they were so occupied with each other that she forgot to nod to me. She was looking at him in a motherly, concerned way, evidently thinking more about his poor



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### *Interventions*

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old blue spectacles than about her little packet of drawings that he was gallantly carrying under one arm.

"Oh, but please," she was saying, "don't imagine I'm the least bit discouraged. It's so good of you not to mind my trying. I was afraid you wouldn't like my sending the same thing back so many times. Of course, after waiting twenty years, as I've told you—a few months don't matter. One has to try, don't you know? One doesn't know why—but it seems to be necessary—" and with that they were out of hearing. I hoped he had been able to see her well enough to understand the necessity of ordering an unusually substantial luncheon. I didn't know whether I was relieved or sorry that it was not I who was to have the honor of spreading that banquet. "The sun shone, and the wind blew, through her." Those things make one feel so gross! Only, why—*why* will people come to New York to make their fortunes!

"If Miss Holbrook comes in when I'm not here," said the Mogul, a little fluttered, yet

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*E. Holbrook's Patience*

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rather stern, when he came back after an hour or so, "just telephone, will you, and, ah—I've ordered the Calendar"—he avoided my eye—"with changes. She will have it ready by fall, she thinks—and will you write an order for the cashier to—to send her a hundred dollars for one of her drawings which I took to-day?" He showed me the reorganized gentian picture. "I thought Alice MacNamara might do a sonnet for it."

I poised my pen. "You're sure the fourth time is safe?"

The "Private" door shut with some hauteur. And I wrote the order with a cheerful if doubtful heart.

But when that drawing was published, in company with Miss MacNamara's weak-kneed but enthusiastic sonnet, there was comment from the Powers.

"Good gracious," they said, "look after him a little better, won't you? Of course it's his eyes. Relieve him all you can, you know." And they raised my salary. They aren't half bad—our owners.

Yet that drawing wasn't bad. Twenty

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years ago they'd have thought it fine. Hamilton might have done it, and they'd have talked about his "subtle charm," his "exquisite appreciation of the plant world," etc., etc., but it wasn't quite what a beginner's work must be nowadays to "compel acceptance."

That summer while the Mogul was away on his vacation, and I held down my own chair and his, too, I thought now and then of that "Meadow's Calendar," wondering what would be the outcome in the fall, and whether, supposing it was then turned down, she would really take it back and do more to it—and yet again, and again.

Poor old Mogul! "It's no use," he wrote. "I can just see my way about and no more. I hope they'll give you my place, my boy"—here he said some nice things—"and if they do, keep an eye out for E. Holbrook in the fall. I've been up near her farm, and one of the last things I could see with any distinctness at all was one of her new drawings. They're not bad, now—not at all. She's

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*E. Holbrook's Patience*

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managed to do it—Lord knows how. I didn't really think she could, though I hoped so. It's patience, and after all that's nine parts of genius. Take her work, and make them pay for it *promptly*—you understand."

But the magazine wouldn't touch it for all my pleading. The book department, however, brought it out as a Christmas gift book, and it sold well, so *that* was all right. But, of course, there was nothing to be paid her for a weary long time. Whether this fact precipitated the Mogul—who had been a widower unencumbered for fifteen years—I don't know, but I received their "announcement" cards before Thanksgiving. So I ate my own dinner at the club with a good appetite, picturing the pretty young-old face of Mrs. Mogul beginning to grow plump at her own table.

A few weeks later I saw her in the flesh at that table, and the reality was much like my fancy. Without doubt she was plumper and younger, and so good to look at that one felt more than ordinarily savage about the Mogul's blindness. Yet he did not seem to

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### *Interventions*

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mind. Already his face had begun to take on that odd peacefulness characteristic of the deaf and blind.

"I know I miss a lot," he said to me, "yet it's something to be able to hear."

She was in the next room at the moment on some small errand of housewifery, and his face was turned toward the open door with the expression of one who gives attention to a pleasant thing. I noticed only that her step was light and quick, that the little sounds she made about her work were soft and accurate; no slip or rattle as is the way with clumsy people.

"You ought to hear her read," said the Mogul.

I did hear her, that evening. It was "Tom Sawyer," that part where he gives his medicine to the cat. The Mogul's laugh exploded whole-heartedly, at brief intervals, and he wiped his eyes behind their blue spectacles. At the office, I had never known him to go beyond a sour smile.

Before I went I had a chance for a few words with Mrs. Mogul.

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"And your work?" I asked.

Her forehead puckered with inquiry as though, positively, she did not know what I meant.

"Oh," she said at length, "I'm afraid I shan't have time for that. I'm afraid," she apologized, "I've lost my ambition."

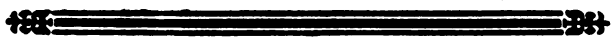
She flicked the leaves of "Tom Sawyer" thoughtfully, then, with something as near to a grin as a lady may venture: "I made a nuisance of myself, didn't I?"

"Have you really given it up—just as you had fairly won out?"

Her eyes were very grave and sweet as they met mine.

"There's no object in it, don't you see? It isn't as if he could see my work. But it doesn't matter. There is so much—so very much else."





THE CONVALESCENCE  
OF GERALD







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## THE CONVALESCENCE OF GERALD

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THE Doctor began in a tone suavely cynical: "Of course, if you *will* keep him done up in cotton wool—" then he met Gerald's sad eyes, looked again at his patiently folded hands, and burst forth hotly: "Madam, take those collars off that boy, and cut his hair, and take off his shoes! Yes, sir! Let him go barefoot, I tell you!"

It was understood in the village that when the Doctor said "Sir" to a woman the case was a serious one.

"Let him play with French children if he wants to. Never mind their morals. Let 'em teach him how to steal apples and grow fat!"

The pale face in the centre of the broad collar quivered with a smile which was repressed with swift politeness behind his thin hand. Mrs. Bailey quailed.

"Steal apples!"

"Get him a horse and a big dog—a puppy

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### *Interventions*

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with some ginger in him, that will walk on him and wash his face."

"W-walk on him?"

"When you've done these things you can call me in again. I shan't come before."

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The first arrival at the Bailey stables was a nebulous yellow mass, with appendages of head and feet. The ears were still raw along the outer edges where they had been clipped to points, and this was rather premature, for one could not yet tell whether he would be mastiff or Great Dane when he grew up. The ears were clipped on the Great Dane hypothesis.

Johnny Premo, the coachman, said: "Yas, he one big dog. Gon be bigger. Doctor he come up to see if he's big 'nough. Mis' Bailey say she couldn' get no bigger. Doctor say, has he tried knockin' down Gerald? Mis' Bailey say she so 'fraid an' cry. Gerald, he put his arms 'round puppy's neck an' say his name gon be Joriander, outer some book he been readin'. Puppy put his arms roun'

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### *The Convalescence of Gerald*

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Gerald's neck an' wash 'is face an' roll 'im all roun' an' 'en Mis' Bailey cry some more. Gerald laugh. Doctor say, all right. Gerald he sleep with 'im that night. Me, I got wash 'im, all tam, all tam."

After Joriander was established came one day a slim, graceful thing with sweeping tail, the arch of whose pretty neck did not reach the shoulders of the black carriage horses. Her eyes were of maternal softness. She trod with an airy swing, but chose her steps fastidiously, seeming to make certain that no smaller thing than herself was underfoot.

Johnny Premo said: "She one Arab pony. Mr. Bailey, he say she cos' someting. Doctor come up to see 'ow she do. We put the new saddle on 'em—all silver and yellow leather, an' hist up Gerald an' hol' 'im on, an' 'e tumble off soon's we leggo, an' she stop an' turn roun' an' look sorry, an' we put 'im up again an' 'e fall off again, but 'e laugh all tam, an' don' get scared, an' bimeby they go roun' the stable yard without Gerald fallin' off, an' Mis' Bailey cry, and Mr. Bailey

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say, she worth every penny, an' the Doctor say, Hurrah, we're comin' on! I fin' Gerald out here nex' mornin' six o'clock curryin' her with his own lil brush an' comb. Says 'er name's Dolly."

The town's two important streets cross at its centre, and of these, the greatest is Elm, which extends from the post-office and railroad station in the west to some indefinite eastern point among farms, calm and smooth under its old trees and between its substantial houses.

The people sit about on verandas and lawns and embroider or play croquet, and particularly they watch all that passes in Elm Street.

"What on earth!" said Mrs. Simpson. She was in a red rocking-chair under an arbor-vitæ scalloping a bib for her first grandchild. Her daughter, Mrs. Ferry, who was swinging in a hammock and reading a magazine, looked up and said:

"That? Oh!—Gerry Bailey. Don't you know the Doctor said they'd lose him if they didn't let him go barefoot and do all sorts

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### *The Convalescence of Gerald*

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of things? Still, I don't see why she need make a circus of him."

"Gerry Bailey, *riding!* I thought it was as much as ever he could be taken around in a baby wagon!"

He wore blue denim overalls and a straw hat like a toadstool. His delicate bare toes squirmed nervously against Dolly's warm ribs, letting the stirrup swing empty. Joriander shambled at one side with a countenance fierce and sullen—unless you were brave enough to draw near and read the baby innocence of his eyes. Then you understood how his great jaws merely grew that way, and had nothing to do with his soul.

Yet he could be stern on occasion, for when Gerald's hat blew off he flung upon it with such violent punishment that he brought back only a small piece of the brim as proof of justice done, the way executioners used to deposit the heads of a king's enemies at his feet. Then Gerald laughed until he fell into the soft wayside grass, and there Joriander danced upon him with rabid affection until Mrs. Simpson came, saying,

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"Get down, you nasty dog!" and lifted Gerald to the saddle again.

It is said that on that first journey he was put back thus six times by troubled neighbors, and his riding has been compared to that of the White Knight in "Alice," but it was no great distance from Dolly's back to the ground, and they always managed to reach grass before the tumble came.

So when Gerald returned to his own gate, where his trembling mother waited, his cheeks were like wild rose petals, his eyes gleamed, and his closely cropped hair, the hat being gone, was like red gold in the sun.

Each day there were fewer tumbles, and Dolly's walk was more rapid, until, about the first of July, she broke into a careful gallop. The people left their embroidery and croquet and stood along the sidewalk ready to pick up the White Knight, but it was not necessary. Gerry smiled as he passed them. The smile was not so gentle as it had been. Someone called it a grin. After that it was observed that the pink stayed in his cheeks. Then the neighbors stopped being sympa-

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### *The Convalescence of Gerald*

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thetic. They even spoke of Joriander resentfully as "that great dog," talked of muzzles and called their own dogs into the house when he appeared. He *was* growing, but that was nothing he could help.

"Will you tell me what *that* is?" gasped Mrs. Simpson. She was putting scallops around the edge of her first grandchild's dress.

"Well, she *has* made a circus of him!" said Mrs. Ferry.

The saddle was gone from Dolly's back. Instead there was a blanket with a wide strap. Dolly was treading as if she said, "Now, hold your breath!" Gerry was standing up on her back. This was near the end of July. The rose color of his cheeks had vanished under tan, and the tan was usually obscured by dirt. His feet were more like bronze than wax. His red-gold hair was bleached to silver and so were his eyebrows and eyelashes. As he passed the people of Elm Street he yelled "Hi!" and did not tumble off.



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Mrs. Ferry said she had heard he was playing with French children—had been observed with Dolly and Joriander up at the sand-pit with a large and ragged following, making some kind of fort which the wind of the night always destroyed, so that it was like Penelope's web and had to be built anew each morning, for there is not enough clay in that region to make such edifices hold together properly.

"You never see them *with* him," explained Mrs. Ferry. "You know how those young ones are, they vanish if you come too near, but I've made them out with my opera-glasses. He's a regular little king of beggars. When I was there to tea, he said to his mother, 'Me, I don' lak health food no more.' And she said, 'Gerry, with *whom* have you been playing?' And he said, 'The Doctor said I might.' And she didn't dare answer a word. I have my opinion of the Doctor."

"What in the world ails that horse!" said Mrs. Simpson. Dolly had grown old and

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## *The Convalescence of Gerald*

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dreary overnight. Her head drooped almost to her fetlocks. She stumbled with bent knees awkwardly. Gerald, if anything, was gayer than ever, but that is a man's way. How could he know that she was proud after the manner of women, loved pretty things and had great notions about being fashionable, and that he had that morning broken her heart?

By an intricate arrangement of ropes a toy express cart, such as small boys drag about by the handle, was hitched behind Dolly. It contained a half bushel of stones whereon sat the boldest of Gerald's ragged followers, switching her heels and shouting, "G'lang!" It was all Dolly could do not to hit the contrivance as she walked. A kick would have been the easiest thing in the world.

"What a shame!" said Mrs. Simpson.

Yet perhaps this discipline was good for Dolly. She may have been too proud and gay, have looked scornfully, for instance, upon the poor old plugs in Gran'pa Santwire's sand cart, for these, indeed, were the

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strangest pair in the country, both being broken-backed, but in different ways, for one sagged until his back was like the letter U, but the other was telescoped so that his legs were too near together, and his spine was humped, poor soul!—till he looked very like a camel.

Even these two now turned to stare at Dolly, while aristocratic beasts drawing correct carriages pretended to shy, and the people all laughed. But sad Dolly kept on, Gerry riding like a little cavalryman, tremendously pleased with himself, the ragged imp behind switching Dolly's heels—that could have kicked so easily—and shouting, "G'lang!"

Thus the Doctor met them, and as usual stopped to take a reassuring pinch of Gerald's biceps, which now had grown from nothing to the size of a cherry, to look at his clean, pink tongue, and tickle him in the ribs to bring out the dimples. The ragged imp slid promptly from the pile of stones and faded into the color of the road, which was the same as his rags, in swift retreat.

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### *The Convalescence of Gerald*

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"Are you sure Dolly likes that?" then asked the Doctor, who kept a professional eye on that little person also, having perceived at the first glance that she was a gentlewoman in thin disguise and as human as anybody.

"Why, she understands we're just playing." But Gerry's tone was troubled. "I thought she was just sleepy—" He clambered down, lifted the mare's head, and looked searchingly into her clouded eyes. Then with trembling mouth corners he untied the ropes and left the load standing as it was.

"It was for the fort, but maybe we can manage some other way," he sighed.

Dolly's head came up. She tossed her forelock out of her eyes, and said "Houyhnhnm!" softly through her silken nose. Joriander thrust a warm congratulatory kiss in her face and described rapid circles of joy about the group. Very far down the yellow road, something that might have been a hummock of sand with a straw hat on it, waited watchfully.

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### *Interventions*

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“Who is that little boy you play with so much, Gerry?”

“Why that’s Napoleon Shampine. He knows *everything*. I was surprised when you told me I was to play with the French children, but I’m glad, because they’re ever so much nicer than *us* children. Why you wouldn’t believe the things I’ve learned from Napoleon!”

“Such as what, Gerry?”

“We-ll, I—I’d rather you wouldn’t mention it to Mamma, but it’s principally about—well—*devils*, you know.”

“Oh!”

“There are so many kinds and they do such strange things. I was really a little—alarmed—until he told me how to ‘make the horns.’”

Gerry illustrated with grimy thumb and little finger.

“If you only remember to do that you’re perfectly safe.”

“I see.”

“And he has promised to teach me other things——”

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*The Convalescence of Gerald*

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"Well, I don't know," said the Doctor anxiously. "I——"

"I'll tell you bimeby," said Gerry. He had mounted and was smiling—perhaps grinning—at the distant speck in the road.

"It's only what you told me to do," he said reassuringly, "and I want you to be s'prized."

Then according to the habits inculcated in his nursery life he leaned forward and put up his dirty little face to be kissed before riding on to join his fidus Achates.

How poor Dolly spurted over that distance! Was it accident or design that made her overturn the wretched express cart in the first leap? The Doctor swore it was design. Elm Street people started up from their embroidery and things and cried out that she was running away, but that was slander. She was only very happy.

The Doctor was a busy man, who slept soundly, but in apple time he kept a shotgun loaded with pepper beside him, left his window open toward the orchard, and

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turned his Pekin ducks in there, which are as good as geese when it comes to saving Rome.

One night he woke to a shrill peal of elfin laughter, after which the hurried thumping of the ducks' feet and their alarmed "hwank" was plain, and he tumbled into his trousers, but whether or not there was a disarming quality in that laugh, the shotgun with pepper in it was left behind, and he carried nothing with him but a bull's-eye lantern. As he entered with clumsy stealth under the drooping branches of a winter pear, the ducks flashed by, glimmering, ghostly, heavy-footed, and a distinct, sibilant whisper came out of the darkness ahead: "You done it! Wat I tole you! Run!" Simultaneously the Doctor was thrown to earth and hot jaws were at his throat.

"Joriander!" said a familiar voice, something like the society tones of Mrs. Bailey, "I'm surprised." The cover of the lantern flew back and shot a red beam into his favorite Fameuse tree, where a laughing and astonished face seemed suspended. Lower

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*The Convalescence of Gerald*

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down were the soft but troubled eyes of Dolly, shining like a deer's while she held her ground with unwilling heroism.

Joriander withdrew, embarrassed, avoiding the path of light from the lantern.

"Gerry Bailey!" said the Doctor, slowly regaining his feet, "I'm surprised!"

"Yes, sir. I didn't intend you should know just yet."

"Where's that—that——"

"You mean Napoleon? He went away."

"Er—is it—that is—is it exactly safe for you to stand on Dolly's back that way to get the apples?"

"It's very convenient, but she *did* jump a little just now when you came."

"Shall I never," mused the Doctor inwardly, "be cured of hyperbole! But who would have supposed the little imp would have taken it literally! I only mentioned the extremest thing I could think of—oh, well——"

"I don't know," he said, "that the night air is just the thing for you, Gerry. We—that is—suppose we go into the dining-



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*Interventions*

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room? There's some floating island left from tea which is very digestible, and some oatmeal cookies. By the way," he said, casting a lantern ray at a small tree near the orchard entrance: "Did you get any of the Anson's Water-core?"

"No, sir; just the Fameuse. I didn't know any of the rest were ripe, except the Duchess and Astrakhan, and we have those at home."

"The Anson's Water-core is new," said the Doctor. "Where's your bag?"

"Oh—why, Napoleon has it."

"The dev—I mean, you don't say! Well, we'll get some of these and go along to the house. They're as good as the Fameuse, I fancy—but different. You hold one up to the sun and you can see the light through it. I'd been intending to send some over to your mother. I guess we can find a bag or something at the house."

The Anson's Water-core were green and difficult to find. Dolly smelt out one first and crunched it while the other two were hunting. When they had a dozen or so they started again for the house, Joriander following

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### *The Convalescence of Gerald*

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apologetically. Once he thrust a wet nose against the Doctor's hand.

"Don't," said that gentleman, "you make me nervous. Just think what might have happened if Gerry hadn't been there!" And Joriander dropped to the rear. Nevertheless, he was allowed to follow the two into the dining-room. At their entry an astonished cat, who was watching a mouse hole, vanished, with a distinct suggestion of brimstone into outer darkness.

Dolly stood outside and sampled a lilac bush, peering in through the screen, bright-eyed and wistful.

The Doctor looked at Gerry attentively by the light of the bull's-eye, made him put out his tongue, and roll up his sleeves to show how fat he was getting, probably for the pleasure of the thing, as it was not twelve hours since he had reassured himself as to those matters.

"You *are* coming on," he said, dished out a liberal bowl of floating island and found a plate of graham cookies, watching their disappearance with professional enthusiasm.

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"It *does* make you rather hungry to be out at night, doesn't it!" observed the mauler, politely.

"You haven't tried it before, then?" said the Doctor with relief.

"No, sir. You said, you know——"

"Y-yes, I know." Was there a grin on the small bronzed face, and a leer in the light blue eyes behind the bleached lashes? The Doctor rubbed his gray hair the wrong way. The pale Gerry for whom he had prescribed horse, dog, and playing with French children, would have been incapable of understanding, much less carrying through, so stupendous a joke as this. He had thought the mysterious French boy was the prime mover in the affair. Now he doubted.

"I say, Gerry—it's all right when it's *my* orchard, you know, but I wouldn't do it to anybody else's if I were you."

The blue eyes opened wide. "Oh, dear, no!"

The tanned cheeks reddened. "You told me to——"

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## *The Convalescence of Gerald*

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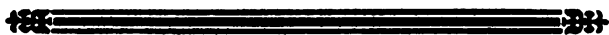
“Yes—it was rather figurative—but that’s all right. Only I don’t like your being out in the night air.”

When the last yellow drop of floating island was gone the Doctor dressed somewhat more formally, and with his lantern in one hand and a bag of Anson’s Water-core in the other saw Gerry home, watching with professional pride his ascent to his room by way of a porch pillar and a grape-vine, Dolly having first been put to bed and tucked up, with an Anson’s Water-core to go to sleep on.

Joriander stretched his great bulk on the veranda under his master’s window. The Doctor patted his head and scratched his pointed ears with great friendliness before he stole away.

“And *that’s* all right,” said he.





SON OF THE  
WOODS





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## SON OF THE WOODS

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THERE are still log cabins here and there in the mountains, but they are as shy as birds' nests in Central Park, and as simply built. The cottages and hotels that have intruded there are not shy and are highly complex, yet for the most part they have at least had the courtesy to put on the green and brown livery of the forest. The Grand Hotel, however, is staring white and of Greek design. Looking up from the Lake, it appears mostly an affair of pillars. It would look well on some Southern shore, with palms and sandy beaches about it. Up here in the woods it is outrageous—and yet, that depends. It is rather fine, too, in a way, at twilight, while the late color is still in the sky, and the windows show their many orange oblongs between the great pillars, and the orchestra tentatively begins in the ballroom, dinner being over.

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Then if you bring your canoe to a quiet nook in the lake—not too near—the big, garish hotel becomes as wild and elfin as any other manifestation of the woods, a moon-light glamour that will vanish with other mists at sunrise.

The cedars in its near neighborhood have been thinned, the ground sodded, and rustic seats and summer-houses are scattered about. But it is better not to venture too far into its groves without your wits, or these cedars will unexpectedly close up their ranks. If you go among them at dusk and come to yourself when too far away to hear the hotel band, and you are unversed in the ways of the woods, and not dressed for the part, there is likely to be annoyance for yourself and your friends before you get back.

So, at least, it happened to Mrs. Brandon one evening. Entering the grove with heavy trouble sagging her usually careless soul, she was overtaken by a sudden storm of tears, and having once made a beginning, luxuriously gave herself up to woe, pressing blindly into the forest, careless of the thorns that

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*Son of the Woods*

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caught at her delicate lace over-dress, snatched her hair awry, and had made altogether a strange figure of her before she realized that the dark silence of the forest had shut in upon her. Then she struck a match from her cigarette case, and read "ten o'clock," upon her tiny watch, listened vainly for the triple beat of the hotel orchestra, and knew that she and Mount Phelim were alone together.

Now Mount Phelim is but an infant mountain, one of the family of old Powasket (who *is* a mountain, and so tall that he does not take off his winter nightcap in spring until the pine woods upon his flanks are full of arbutus). Beside Powasket, as our town sees them, Phelim is but an inconsiderable scallop on the sky line, a ripple at the edge of the big mountain's garment. Yet, were it not for the comparison, he would make, by himself, a very respectable small giant. Mrs. Brandon had seen many mountains and seas in her day, but had never before been quite alone with even a small one. She forgot the sorrow that had driven her so unceremoni-

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*Interventions*

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ously forth into the night, and fell silent for a moment, like a child who after a space of futile whimpering is really about to cry. Then she began to scream, whereat one may imagine all the furry and feathery ears upon Mount Phelim pricked in astonishment, and the leaves stirred by small, quiet persons in stealthy retreat.

Even Phelim himself held his breath for a moment, like a sleeper half-waked by some unimportant matter, then exhaled a long, sweet, contented sigh through his cedars and pines, and slept again under the faint light of the half-moon, while Mrs. Brandon, having screamed herself out, obeyed the instinct of all embarrassed animals since first lions roaring after their prey did seek their meat from God, and clung, motionless, silent, and alert, to a shaggy cedar trunk.

It is amazing how cold a midsummer night can be upon a mountain. She drew the silken train of her dinner-gown about her shoulders and trembled within it for the space of an hour. At the dark moment when the moonlight altogether withdrew from the tree tops,

she roused to a primitive and sensible action. Drawing together some pine needles and dry leaves she lit them with a match from her cigarette case (small vices are of advantage occasionally) and spread her little shaking hands, weighted with cold rubies and diamonds, to the blaze. The nearest trunks were warmly splashed with firelight, but the opaquely black gulfs beyond these were worse than before. "I forget," she thought wearily, "whether fires attract animals, or scare them away, but, perhaps, being eaten up is no worse than freezing to death," and so, with what philosophy she might, she waited for the morning.

On that side of Phelim opposite the Grand Hotel is one of those shy log cabins; not a temporary hunter's hut, but a real habitation wherein the great matters of birth and death have been transacted, as well as commonplace minutiae of living.

The location must have been a trapper's choice in the first place, and the steep acres of corn and potatoes an after-thought of changing time and custom. Mount Phelim is

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### *Interventions*

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hardly a person to take kindly to the corn-and-potato habit. There are many tentative pines and maples among the weeds that spring up in the furrows.

Perhaps Phelim likes the habit of humanity itself no better than that of corn and potatoes, for one winter he and Powasket together filled that little valley so full of snow and zero weather that these—and other causes—wiped out all but one of a family named Frechette. They spared Alois, who thereafter thrived in his loneliness like a hardy seedling from whose roots a number of weaker brethren have been torn, for such is the survival of the fittest.

Alois woke to the before-sunrise clamor of a nestful of bluebirds above his window, who were scheduled for flight at that hour. He yawned, rose on his elbow, and regarded with a sleepy smile the dewy oblong of green twilight that marked his open door. Now that all his crowding family had forever gone out through that door, he saw no object in closing it except against storms and winter.

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The light growing, he fished out a battered geometry from beneath the sack of pine needles that served him as a pillow. Some quarter of an hour's scowling and muttering served him with this, and then a long sonorous call, as of a distant trombone, summoned him to seize his milk pail and meet little black Lizette, who waited him, sad-eyed, and fragrant with milk, in the pink light and the dew.

Her six quarts—save one for his breakfast—being deposited in the tiny log fortress of a dairy by the brook, he came back to his house and built his fire and set on the frying-pan with slices of bacon in it. When this had yielded its fat and was sending up pungent smoke, he added thick slabs of Indian pudding, craftily drew the whole arrangement to a part of the stove where it should sizzle for ten minutes or so without becoming charcoal, and went down to the brook for his bath. A deep still pool had been naturally fenced off from the shallow turmoil of the brook by the intervening root of an oak, shaped like a great smooth knee—as

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### *Interventions*

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though a giant, sitting on the bank ages ago to cool his feet in the stream had forgotten what he was about and been changed to a tree.

Cold! Cold as only a mountain brook can be on a midsummer morning. Alois went in with a shout, splashed and grunted until a cloud of clean brown mud was stirred up from the bottom, came out and danced upon the moss in the sun until he was dry, and then went singing up the hill to his breakfast, in all the world nothing more gloriously alive and hungry than himself.

Had it not been for his appetite! Taking the frying-pan upon his knees, he ate it quite clean and polished, set it down with a sigh, and examined his stone jar of corn meal. When his finger, plumbing the yellow depths touched bottom before the second joint was covered he became very grave. He took his hoe in silence from its nail just outside the door, put a book in the pocket of his overalls, and marched to his potato field, arriving at that place of business promptly at five, according to custom.

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The morning was drowsy and lovely, developing, as the sun rose, into one of those days that never fully wake up, but stay dreamily abed until twilight. The air of the valley was hot and still. In the incessant mutter of the brook nothing was said about high ambitions and the glorious things that lay beyond a summer's toil with books and vegetables.

At eight o'clock Alois hooked his hoe over the limb of an apple-tree, and took his book to the border of the woods. He found the dreams of the day, however, as thick there as in the field, and putting ambition aside for the moment, he filled his corn-cob pipe with tobacco raised in his own garden and lay on his back among the pine needles, his knees crossed and his arms under his head, with no loftier thought in his brain than to idly follow the pattern of the pine branches against the sky. . . .

Some one (he dreamed) called and wept in the forest, but he was too sleepy to answer. Besides, in his dream, he knew that the calling and weeping were only a dream, and



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nothing to worry about—or, if it wanted him, let it come where he was. . . .

The leaves parted and a wild, tear-stained face looked at him fixedly for a long moment. He sat up, but the dream, instead of being disturbed by the action, stepped out into the sunlight.

He had read of such things—Calypso and her isle, for example, and Circe, and La Belle Dame Sans Merci—but they were classics. Classics are marble and Greek and do not develop one's imagination into belief. His grandmother's stories had been neither marble nor Greek, and these he had believed.

Her hair hung in two dishevelled yellow plaits. Her arms and throat were bare. Her gown, except where misty rags of lace still clung to it, was of silk, the color of green flame.

She conveyed no definite idea of age or youth. At first he thought her very young, then he was not so sure. She might be old with the infinite and unwithering old age of mountains and forests—old as Time or the

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Greek and marble goddesses of whom he had heard so much in the books that were to take him to college.

As to her beauty, it seemed to him complete (though in her own world it had long been agreed that Mrs. Brandon's looks were on the wane). She wrung her slim hands, their jewels flashing in the sun.

"I am lost!"

His brown face was as bewildered as her pale one. He rose and removed his shapeless straw hat.

"I am hungry," said she.

He hardly understood. One did not connect the idea of hunger with ladies in green who came suddenly out of forests on midsummer day.

"I came from—" she began, then hesitated. She was not sure that she wanted to be directed to the Grand Hotel just yet. She had not lived in the world for—the length of time she had lived in it, without learning to prize the flavor of novelty. So many things had grown stale and bitter. From the stale and bitter she had fled weeping into the for-

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est. Now, after a night of amazement, she had come out into a morning place, with a morning young man in it. If she herself, by age and experience, belonged properly to a later and more arid time of day, that was no good reason for foregoing a misplaced hour of youthfulness which Fate had thrown in her way.

“I should so *dearly* love something to eat.”

He made a grave gesture of hospitality in the direction of his house, and they walked together across the sunny pasture. The tattered hem of her long green skirt rustled over the short grass, with the sound of wind among leaves. Her head drooped and she breathed unevenly, like a child that has cried overmuch. Almost he expected her to dissolve in the strong light. It was noon; did that altogether account for her casting no shadow?

His kitchen as they entered seemed strangely shrunken since he ate his breakfast there, and disordered and mean. The dishevelled lady hesitated in the door-way, —a silhouette outlined with gold by the

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*Son of the Woods*

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sun,—and held back her ragged skirts, then entered slowly, with a wary eye upon the rusty and greasy cook-stove, and sat down doubtfully upon the only unbroken chair.

“I can fry you some bacon,” said Alois timidly.

“I think,” she suggested, “perhaps a glass of milk and some bread—it would take so long to cook anything. I don’t know *when* I’ve been so hungry!”

Her voice broke in a little wail. He scurried out to his store of milk by the spring, and broke a pitcher in his embarrassed haste, forgetting unaccountably where his various utensils were kept.

“I haven’t any bread,” he apologized, setting the milk before her, “but here is some cold hasty-pudding.”

She made no criticism, but ate eagerly, and when she had quite finished, laid her head upon her arms and wept.

“I *was* so hungry,” she explained. But this grief for past trouble gave way after a little to contemplation of her gown.

“Is there some woman about here?”

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"No. I've got a needle and thread, though, and a thimble my mother had."

He brought her these implements in a tin box that had once held tobacco. Then from a corner on the clock shelf, where they had lain undisturbed since his mother loosed her thin black hair for the last time, he took a handful of crooked and rusty hair-pins.

His glance lingered upon them in a way she did not at first understand, as if he had bestowed a gift of great value. She had been about to put them aside with dainty disfavor and perfunctory thanks, but something in the rusty evidence of long disuse conveyed the story of their value, and she accepted them graciously.

Then Alois went out and sat upon his wood-pile. The silence of mid-day had fallen upon the birds, and there was no wind to rouse the leaves; the soliloquy of the brook was the only living sound. In the gap between the near green shoulder of Mount Phelim and the blue-filmed one of Powas-ket billowed other mountains in gradual retreat until the farthest was hardly distin-

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guishable from the pale blue of the sky. Beyond these, he knew, lay that world whose many voices, plaintive, gay, solemn, or threatening, had come to him by way of books and the faint echoes of that small town where he had learned all that he knew. As to the town he believed it to resemble that world which lay to the south as the little trout-stream whose voice was in his ears resembled the St. Lawrence toward which it hurried. He knew that his ideas of it were vague and might be incorrect in some important respects. Now, out of these unknown blue southern depths had suddenly appeared one whom he might question.

He had seen others of her kind wearing the sleek and infinitely varied livery of power and wealth. As he hoed his beans, he had heard, with strange stirring of the blood, the tally-ho horn of a coachful from the big hotel on the other side of the mountain. Sometimes, as his business took him up or down the slender yellow road, he had met them and been pompously questioned on the topography of the country, questions which he

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had answered civilly. People who came from so great a place as New York had a right to some hauteur of bearing, just as Romans had, if ever their stately togas deigned to trail among the peasants' vineyards and fields. Besides, he should be among them presently. His way to their city was charted, stage by stage, as any definite journey should be. Barring accidents, he thought he knew very well where his goal lay. But with this ambition, the sweet glitter and gayety, although he felt their power, he had little to do, nor was it of the roll of Caesar's chariot, but of some remoter and finer thing, that the horn of the tally-ho had spoken.

When, after an hour's reconstruction, the Green Lady issued from his kitchen, she seemed less as if she might have come out of one of his grandmother's stories or the history of that remarkable man, Ulysses, and bore instead, in her altered gown and coiled hair, the unmistakable hall-mark of New York, but this made her no less mysterious to Alois.

He came down from his wood-pile and stood before her with respectful curiosity,

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noting with surprise that she had brought some of his text-books with her. Her finger was between the pages of his "Iliad" as though to mark a place.

"You aren't a *poseur*, are you—a recluse?" said she. "You don't look," her eyes swept his six feet of lean health, "as if you were under the doctor's orders."

"No, I belong here. I'm preparing for college."

"But—you live here quite alone?"

"Yes."

Her eyes still questioned.

"There used to be eight," said Alois, with a melancholy gaze at the silent little house. "All but me died winter before last."

Her inquisitive eyes were shocked and sorry. She turned them away respectfully from his tragedy.

After a little silence she said: "I am quite alone, too. . . ."

"I think I'll stay here till dinner-time, if you don't mind. I should be less conspicuous if I went in while they're in the dining-room. . . . And I'd rather enjoy looking



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over your Greek with you, if you like. I was clever once, they said."

They sought the shade of the apple-tree. She did not, however, at once open the books.

"And you live here and study," she recapitulated, inviting further information. This he now gave with an eager rush, as is the way of the solitary and silent when the novelty of sympathy suddenly offers.

"Lots of people died that winter. I stayed out of school to take care of mother and the baby, but the baby only lived a few days. Then mother died. She wanted to, I guess. She'd been tired of things for a good while. But that started father off on a big spree, so when the little chaps all got diphtheria there was only me to look out for 'em—and—I didn't know much—so by the time he got back I was the only one left. I don't know why it didn't get me. Perhaps I'm stronger than most. When he got here and found everybody gone but me he turned right around and went back and drank himself dead in two days. I didn't blame him. I was a little crazy too, I guess. I couldn't stay in

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the house any more than he could. I went up on Phelim and spent the rest of the winter tramping around there and up Powasket. I'd come home and take care of the cow, and have some milk and curl up beside her to get warm and sleep a little. But I wouldn't go into the house. Then by and by spring came, and the first grass. . . . Did you ever notice the first grass in spring? It's as green as your dress. I looked at the grass and went down to the cemetery and fixed up their graves some. And after that I opened the door, and made the fire and swept up. By that time I felt more as if I could stand it. So I borrowed an ox team and a plough, and when I had the potatoes in went back to school. I thought I might as well be doing that as anything else."

He stopped, apparently considering that his narrative came to an end at this point. After a little she asked:

"And then?"

"Why—I seemed to have more time than I knew what to do with. I thought I might as well keep on and go to college!"

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He came to another full stop.

"And when you finish college?" she pursued.

"That's four years ahead," he evaded with a shy smile, through which she detected the glimmer of some definite purpose hunted to its last cover. While she pondered how best to unmask it, a packet of newspaper clippings slipped out of the book in her lap. They were thumbled and ragged. His eye caught them as they fell, and he seized them as if to hide them, but on second thought placed them in her hands.

"I sometimes cut out the pieces in the papers that tell about things that ought to be different. I thought maybe by and by when I got an education I could get a job among those fellows down there that are trying to set things right."

But before she had opportunity to see what they were he had caught them back and sternly sorted out a number, which he folded together and put in the pocket of his overalls.

"Some are too bad even to think of," he

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explained, with a kind of melancholy wonder in his voice.

Among those that he returned she found many turbulent paragraphs on both sides of the labor question: the rest were anecdotes of unsanitary tenement houses, neglected children, sweat shops, and all manner of squalid wrongs and stupid cruelties.

"You see," he justified himself, "there's a lot to do if you give your mind to it. It's a puzzle to know just how to get at it, but I thought maybe after I'd got an education I could tell better what to do next. Now here—" opening another book he showed pasted inside the cover a half-tone newspaper portrait—"there's a *man*. He's been doing things down your way. My idea would be to go to him, and ask him to put me at something he'd like done."

His sophisticated listener gasped at the naïveté of the plan, and yet— There had been a primitive directness in the attack which this man had made upon primitive and stagnant evils. He had gone forth as simply as a medieval knight against a drag-

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on, and his victory had been as simple and as epic. Alois's plan seemed made of the same stuff. "Der reiner Thor," she mused, regarding him with new interest.

"I know your hero," she said.

His face took on the dewy wonder of a novice who sees a vision.

"You know—him?"

"I've met him, now and then, at dinners."

"What did he say?"

She laughed. The young expect their demi-god's words to be always winged.

"Why—I don't remember. About what other people say, I suppose, at dinner. We—they"—she explained delicately—"aren't supposed to talk shop at dinner, you know, We have a way of pretending that everything in life is very jolly and gay, and that none of us is in earnest. Perhaps we really think just that. We have to pretend to, at least. I dare say it's as good a way as any other."

"He pretends, too?" Alois wondered.

"Oh, yes. At least, he was pretending when I saw him."

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“Is this picture like him?”

“Not much. That’s made handsome, I suppose, for a campaign picture. He’s rather gray and tired-looking. I’m sorry I didn’t notice him more. The people I know don’t take him very seriously. We are of the easy-going sort. ‘Life is short,’ we say, and ‘what’s the use?’ Why,” she broke out fretfully, “what *is* the use? These things”—she touched the clippings, “have always existed in one form or another, and always will. People like your idol just stir them up and spread the poison. Why? Let the Person who made the world take care of it.”

The would-be philanthropist and reformer humbly put away his documents and stared. She seemed very lovely and very scornful—and very wise. A weak, unnerving thrill ran through him. He had been thinking well of himself and his aims and of his hero. Were they, then, nothing? And she had come from the place where the world lived. She ought to know. But her philosophy had made the grasshopper, leaping purposelessly from a blade of grass to her shoulder and thence to

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a buttercup, as important under the warm sun as himself and his ambitions.

With something of guilty surprise the lady observed the reproach and fear in his face, and not at the moment seeing any other way out, sought to justify her statements further.

“Why, look at it!” she said harshly, stretching out a delicate hand toward the quiet hills that were like the patient backs of a sleeping herd of behemoths—“Look at the mere bulk of the world. Could you move it by pushing with your fists this ground where we sit? No more can you or your superman alter men and their troubles. Their selfishness and indifference are invincible. What’s the use of letting a drowning man drag you down?” she concluded with a kind of satirical pride in having spoken well.

“You mean there’s no use in anything?”

“I didn’t quite say that, did I?” She wondered if she had.

“It comes to that, doesn’t it?”

“Why—not quite. One may still have a very good time. There’s music, and pleasant

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*Son of the Woods*

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people, and good things to eat and see and smell."

"No more than that?"

"Many people think that is enough. *Very* many people think so."

"I'd rather," he said simply, "you told me the truth, whatever it is. Very likely I have wrong ideas. I know it's said you can't believe the newspapers."

"It's all the truth I know," she maintained uneasily. "It—it isn't very nice, is it? But it's the best I have."

"Then the first thing to do is to make money!"

He lay down with his hands clasped under his head, his face hidden by his straw hat, and was silent for a long time. At length he sat up and fixed her with a bright stare.

"You mean if I worked and made money, I could live the way you people over there at the hotel live; eat and dance and see things and travel—see *you* as—as people of your own sort see you?"

"Why, as to that——"

"See you——" he repeated with a curious



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smile. "At first I didn't understand what there could be to interest one in living that way—there seemed to be no centre, nothing one could grip. But when I look at you I understand better. . . . Who are you?"

Her pulses answered his headlong speech with a jubilant thrill of youth. Her eyes half closed with the primitive pleasure of holding so fine a thing as this young heart in the palm of her hand, and she smiled—a smile symbolic of the lure of the world's brightness and of herself. The drowsy midsummer enchantment thickened about them. Alois came nearer, awkwardly, on his knees.

"Do you know," he said, "what I thought when you came out of the woods? My head's so full, you know, of these old Greek and Latin yarns I'm cramming up on. I kept thinking of Circe, and Calypso, and all that queer lot, but—you wouldn't turn people into pigs, would you?" He smiled timidly at his figure of speech, then went on: "What you've been saying sounds a little like it. . . but there are other stories about saints appearing when people were puzzled and

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needed to be told what to do. . . . Which are you?"

The Green Lady opened her lips to speak, then shut them without a word, frowning at her small glittering hands clasped over the forgotten book in her lap.

Turn people into pigs?

Had one power, then, to make a difference? What right had she to be echoing those bitter, futile old phrases that she had heard so often? They hung stale in the pure air like the reek of essences. They had seemed true enough where she came from. Now it was as if a lie and a poison had gone out of her. But, above all, what manner of woman was she to flaunt the last glow of her belated prettiness in the eyes of this boy and use it to shame him out of his innocent ambitions! She had seen it set forth in color and music that winter what manner of person it was who had striven to turn Parsifal from his mission. Her cheeks grew as red as the painted ones of poor Kundry.

Must women be—like that—always? She grappled for an instant with an instinct as

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### *Interventions*

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old as time, and conquered it by another instinct which—if we believed in certain things—we might claim to be older than time. When next her face was visible to him it was softened and maternal.

“What is your name?” she asked, and when he had told her:

“Alois—I am older than you think. I am so old that—if my boy had lived he might have been entering college this fall with you. Perhaps if he had lived I should have been different. I might have believed in things as you do. I have been telling you—not very cleverly—the sort of argument the world puts up against these ideas of yours. But just because I have been in the world longer than you have is no sign that I know it better. I am too near it, perhaps—and out of focus. Perhaps you get a correcter view of it from here.”

The feverish light of his face was replaced by dismayed, ingenuous amazement when she disclaimed her youthfulness, but this gave place, slowly, to reverential awe.

She looked away with a bitter smile. It

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*Son of the Woods*

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was hard to see that first look fade. It might be the last time she would ever see it in a man's face. She had renounced much, she felt—and yet how slight a thing it was, too! But one values a thing no less because it is evanescent.

“You as old as my mother!”

But after a few moments of troubled consideration he was able to accept the idea. She turned her face quite frankly to the pitiless sunlight, and let him read what he liked in the fine traceries about her eyes and mouth. And he read it with the cruel tactlessness of his age and sex. Then, as a little boy might have done, he took one of her hands and pressed it to his cheek.

“Do you know, I'm glad about that—I thought you were young, like me, and it scared me——”

“Perhaps we would better study now,” she said evenly. “If you are going to be ready for college in the fall you haven't much time to give up to entertaining chance visitors.”

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### *Interventions*

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He obediently opened his "Iliad" somewhere in the fourth book.

"I'll look up the words," he said companionably, "and you translate."

And so, with a brief interval for another meal of Indian pudding and milk, the day passed. They kept strictly to the books. Her old facility came back flying—she wondered from time to time at her memory, but did not stop to wonder long for fear of breaking the charm.

Once, as her restless fingers wandered in the grass while she read they plucked a leaf which she had almost torn apart, when she beheld in it the mystic quatrefoil of a four-leaf clover! Alois seemed cheered by the omen, and she pinned it to her dress.

As the shadows began to wheel their tips eastward, and the west took on gold, they swung to the conclusion of the fourth book of the "Iliad." Then Alois yawned and clapped his dictionary covers with drowsy triumph.

"If I only had you to help me every day," he said covetously.

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*Son of the Woods*

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"You must make the most of me while I last," she said, and plunged into the fifth book, but she plunged alone, for, looking up presently to see why a word she had inquired for was not forth-coming, she beheld the philanthropist and reformer sound asleep, and as he lay, his finger shut in the pages of the dictionary, he might, but for his bulk, have been a child of ten.

She gently abstracted the book and went on with her work like a beneficent brownie. Having recognized the yellow road that was to take her to the hotel, she knew that her departure need not take place for an hour or more.

She tore out a fly-leaf and wrote the translation. Something about the Berserker Diomed appealed to her and roused her. Why! Fighting of any sort was fine! Of course, the boy was right.

Half-consciously at first, her translation fell into the martial tread of pentameters. Perceiving this, she erased, coaxed, and paraphrased until she made her English something that might claim to be verse:

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*Interventions*

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"Then to Diomed, son of Tydeus, came  
Pallas, with strength and daring for his soul,  
That so he might surpass the other Greeks  
And win Fame's crown forever. On his helm  
And on his shield she placed unwearied fire,  
That he might flame among those lowering hosts,  
Like Sirius rising from his ocean bath.  
And so his shining head and shoulders plunged  
Into the thickest transport of the fight."

"There," she said, chewing her pencil,  
"I'm not so ashamed of that."

The evening was now so far advanced that a faint but increasing point of light indicated the evening star, seeing which she knew she must hasten if she would be back at the hotel before the crowds were coming out of the dining-room. The star fitted well in her poem. She looked at it pensively for awhile, and then back with a sigh at the young face in the grass.

One of her many rings was an emerald, a treasure left from her distant girlhood, when she was as young as this boy. This she removed, forcing it gently over the tip of his little finger.

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*Son of the Woods*

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Then she shut the four-leaf clover and her pencilled translation between the leaves of the "Iliad" at the fifth book and turned slowly away.

Her face quivered and broke in sudden tears.

She hurried back and knelt over him. Her lips touched his hair.

Then, rising, she ran swiftly across the field, her green dress softening into gray with the rest of the shadowed landscape.



5



T U R N E D O U T T O  
G R A S S





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## TURNED OUT TO GRASS

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JOHN BLAISDELL looked out over the soft-bosomed mountains, glimmering river, and crude green of a near strip of woodland which made up the "view" from Walter Harkness's new house, and said, "I envy you."

If the passion of envy always left a man's face so placidly kind, it would hardly need placing on the list of deadly sins. Perhaps he should have said "congratulate," yet that would not have been all the truth. No,— it was envy, rarefied and harmless.

The city lay behind him like a foul dream. The murky office where he had worked half-heartedly these many empty years—he thought of it with the distaste of one who has cracked a bad nut between his teeth. And the heat! He had fled to the hills that morning with the consciousness of heat apoplexy perched upon his shoulder like black care, not leaving him until he tumbled into the in-

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*Interventions*

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choate but welcoming bosom of the Harkness family, saying feebly, "I—thought you wouldn't mind." Harkness, having relieved him of collar and coat, stretched him in a hammock on the unfinished veranda, where Mrs. Harkness, with maternal purring, brought him a mint julep and a palm-leaf fan. The children were down by the brook, she said, and would go crazy as soon as they caught sight of him.

Harkness had bought the wonderful old farm in March. Orchards, meadows, and wood-lot of a hundred years' cultivation, old Dutch farm-house to make an architect's eyes shine over the remodelling of it, so much could be done without injuring its fine, strong lines. It was long, low, rooted to the soil, with a giant of a chimney whose fire-places—in the kitchen the crane and hooks had been bricked in just as they hung—were already restored to their old uses. The roof would bear a discreet pair of dormers, and a wide veranda would in no way hurt the solid and primitive dignity of style. Then, with the cellar cemented and the water

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### *Turned Out to Grass*

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brought up from the brook with a ram, there seemed little left in this world for a man's desire, particularly when one ranged in the foreground of these possessions the five pretty faces which belonged to Harkness—the prettiest of the five being that under the busy sunbonnet in the berry-patch, whither Mrs. Harkness had departed after administering the julep.

The changes were now progressing, the noise of them having but just subsided for the day.

Blaisdell, having lit a cigar, nestled deeper into the hammock like a tired child and drowsily repeated his placid declaration of envy.

To his surprise, Harkness, after drawing on his pipe for a moment in silence, blurted out, "Well, I don't know——"

Blaisdell raised himself on his elbow and stared.

"Not a fly in the ointment so soon?"

"Flies have a way of getting into ointment," grumbled Harkness. "One must expect it, I suppose."

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### *Interventions*

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Blaisdell studied his downcast face anxiously. "The title's all right." That was his first thought, the responsibility of searching it having lain upon his own shoulders.

"Legally, yes. Practically, there seem to be two opinions, and if old Van Ander pesters me much more, he'll have me doubting whether I've any moral right to the place at all."

"Van Ander? What kick has he got? You paid him in full."

"He wants to eat his cake and have it too. He offered to buy it back the day the men began to rip things open; but, hang it! I'd signed the contract for the repair-work—even if I'd been willing otherwise to give it up. You have to draw the line at altruism *somewhere*, and he didn't even have the full sum that I'd paid him. His daughters—a sort of Goneril and Regan pair—had already got away with about a third of it. He lives with Goneril, down the hill a bit. You can see the chimney and the window of his little attic room." He pointed with the stem of his pipe. "There, between the cedars. It wasn't

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*Turned Out to Grass*

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visible when we first came, but he had a big cedar cut down so that he could watch us better. He has a spy-glass. It's trained on us now, unless he's sneaking around the farm, mourning over weeds in the corn and potatoes."

In the far-away black eye of the window Blaisdell fancied he detected some kind of movement, a lighter blur the size of a face, and then, like the light in the pupil of an eye, a gleam as of sun striking on glass.

"Comes here and snarls at the workmen for spoiling the house," mourned Harkness. "A dozen times a day I'll hear him tune up, always beginning the same way—'It's none of my business.' For instance: 'It's none of my business, but you never can keep warm at them fireplaces in winter. We had 'em bricked up a-purpose. I done it myself, me an' the hired man, thirty year ago, come Thanksgiving. You'll be mighty glad to come back to stoves, I can tell ye.' Or: 'It's none of my business'—this was when the furnace came—'but I wouldn't have one o' them infernal machines in my cellar for a



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### *Interventions*

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thousand dollars. Forget to put water in 'em some day, and then where'll ye be? Powder-mill blew up, over yonder, ten year ago; killed two men. You could see the smoke twenty mile.' And if it's all *I* can do to keep civil, you can imagine the effect on the workmen. One of them came down from the roof the other day and stuck his chin in the old man's face. 'If it's none of your business, dry up an' go home! Your mother oughtn't to let you out.' Van Ander got white and turned tail. But the carpenter repented, being Irish, and next day, when Van Ander came slinking up, they sat on a pile of lumber, smoking sociably through the noon hour. What the old fellow said I don't know, but as the Irishman climbed up to the roof again, I heard him say, 'Looney!' Maybe he's right. *I* don't know. Van Ander thinks I am. He spreads accounts of my insanity through the neighborhood, helps himself to my fruit, prowls around the house at night—I've often looked out and seen him in moonlight or early sunrise sitting all huddled up on a pile of lumber."

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*Turned Out to Grass*

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"Have you threatened to arrest him for trespass?"

"Oh, no, you couldn't, you know."

"Shucks! Tell him to go and buy another farm. You can't blame yourself for anything."

"I don't blame myself, exactly. Yes, why *doesn't* he buy another farm? That's what I asked him. He says he's too old to begin over again. Seems to blame me for *that*. Yet he's only fifty-five."

"But—fifty-five— I'm forty-nine myself. Fifty-five isn't old."

"And I'm forty-five. No. You'd think he could begin again."

"Fifty-five! That isn't old. You're just ready to settle down and enjoy things at fifty-five. At fifty-five you ought to have done enough drudgery so that you can sit down with a good appetite to the—well, the essential things that one can only give half an eye to while one is hurrying about on the business of daily bread. For instance, I've been planning—how would you like me for a neighbor? I just ache to scratch around in

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*Interventions*

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the dirt and make things grow. And we could get up golf-links and a tennis-court for the kiddies, and winters I'd put in writing law-books——"

He had wandered from the Van Ander problem, his enthusiasm having broken away coltishly into imaginary green pastures. He sat up astride of the hammock and looked about at the landscape, now taking on the vague yellow and purple bloom of later afternoon. "What's the use of staying shut up in an office when you can have all this? 'Go out and possess the land.' I thought I'd build a lodge of about four rooms with a big fireplace. I suppose I could get a native female to come in and clean up."

Harkness brightened, then grew doubtful. "It sounds good, and your head-piece is enough better than Van Ander's, so you might stand it all right, but—giving up one's occupation—for myself, I'd be afraid to stop painting."

"But you artist fellows—that's different. That's the way your brain is made in the beginning. You can't stop. But a profes-

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### *Turned Out to Grass*

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sion, like law, is accident and environment."

"Maybe. It would be great luck, having you for a neighbor. But Van Ander was so chipper at the idea of quitting work. Said he was being turned out to grass. Always believed in turning old horses out to grass when they'd worked hard all their lives. His children were married, and he was lonesome all by himself. He'd board around with them. They could take care of the old man, he guessed, seeing as how he'd made 'em each a present of a house and lot when they got married. Well, he has stayed with Goneril ever since. Her attic window gives him a view of us."

"Goneril and Regan—are they so terrifically Shakespearian as all that?"

"Shakespeare knew most things—among others the singular effect which somebody else's money has on the primitive mind. The Van Ander Goneril and Regan aren't good-looking, as one imagines the Misses Lear to have been. Regan—who might not be so bad if he'd give her a chance—is fat and snubby,

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### *Interventions*

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and has eight or ten children. Her real name is Lyddy Ann. Goneril's name is Claribel, and she's built like a hat-rack. She hasn't any children, only a cat, who comes up here now and then after a chicken. She called on Lucy when we first came, and stayed all the afternoon. Lucy nearly went crazy trying to entertain her. She kissed Lucy when she went away. Lucy said it was like being caressed by a file or a dried herring, except that it was slimy as well as dried up.

"She wears a very blue silk shirt-waist, and a picture-hat with pink roses, and white cotton gloves, and sings in the choir. Hereabouts she's considered quite stylish. And she's a good housekeeper, with all kinds of mats to wipe your feet on; and she wouldn't let poor old Van Ander take Moses, his dog, to her house, because dogs clutter 'round. You'll remember Lear's daughters wouldn't let him have followers, either. I've been reading *Lear* lately; thought I might get points from it. That's what they finally split on—the followers. Goneril thinks her cat is enough pets for the family, and doesn't see

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*Turned Out to Grass*

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why her father needs his dog around, when the cat is willing and ready to sit in his lap at any time. He came up here and gave me the dog and told me his troubles. That was before he went back on me. He was grateful to me then for taking the beast. Now he seems to think I won him away by craft and guile. Strange thing, a point of view! Perhaps digestion affects it a good deal. They live on coffee and ham and canned tomatoes down at Goneril's."

A long and elaborate peal upon a Japanese gong—this manner of announcing dinner was the familiar task of a small Harkness—called them into the house. The glow of sunset struck across the dinner-table, emphasizing the shining chafing-dish and the large glass dish of red and yellow raspberries. The children kept up an incessant chirping, while Mrs. Harkness, busy and content, extended her motherly care even to Blaisdell and to the dog Moses, who watched from the doorway.

Remembering how pale and winter-killed those ruddy faces had been before the farm

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### *Interventions*

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was bought, Blaisdell rejoiced in the clear tan which now masked them all. Even the pink and white of the two-year-old had taken on a golden tinge. He was a quiet person, but with a tendency to put his fist in the sugar-bowl.

The air was hot and dry; plants, even weeds, were dying of the drouth, but the pressure at Blaisdell's neck was gone, and that terror of ambulances, hospitals, and the "Death List for the Day" had departed.

"We've lost our blackcaps," said Mrs. Harkness. Her face was burned more richly than the children's, particularly the capable-looking nose. "The heat has withered them on the bushes—little dried-up mummies. But the yellow raspberries do very well, and some red ones are left, and next week there'll be blackberries—monsters! There's simply no end to the fruit. Have you seen the quince-orchard? We'll have to sell some. It would be a sin to let it waste, and if I put it all up, there'd be enough for a regiment. I'm going to start a cannery—home-made jams, you know, and that sort of thing. I've read of

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*Turned Out to Grass*

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women who made money that way, and paid off mortgages and things——”

She stopped and blushed, not having meant to mention mortgages before Blaisdell since it was he who held the mortgage on the house, and she suspected (but Blaisdell knew) that the likelihood of its early payment was small.

After dinner Harkness suggested: “There’s some mint up the road. We might have another julep before going to bed.” So they started out with their pipes and Moses. By that time the stars were coming out above the pale remnant of sunset. The small insect noises sounded thirsty and faint. So long had the drouth and heat continued that there was no dew. The dusty white ribbon of road wavered up a hill so that by degrees one came to a view of the valley, where the window lights twinkled, much like the meadow of fire-flies nearer at hand.

Having reached a spot where the fragrance of mint hung like an invisible cloud, they sat on a fence with their feet dangling in the leaves, waiting for moonlight to show them the plants; but Moses went over to the



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*Interventions*

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other side of the road, where the slim cedars stood like men in the darkness, and lay down with an odd whimper, his tail stirring up a cloud of dust as it brushed back and forth.

"You say Van Ander hasn't bothered Lucy yet?"

"No; I've managed to ward him off one way or another. I don't want her pity roused. She thinks he's a nuisance, but has missed the tragedy of it so far—and—she mustn't be worried—now."

A comprehending flicker of memory showed Blaisdell a small pink knit shoe, the needles still sticking in it, which had peeped at him out of a demure pink-ribboned work-basket. The Harkness two-year-old had outgrown the foolishness of pink knit shoes ages ago. Decidedly, then, Lucy must be guarded from worries.

For, once Blaisdell had a wife himself, and they two had lived in a suburban house with an acre of ground, where he had done great things with a garden. For a season she had been busy in that way, knitting little shoes. But they had never been worn. Instead she

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*Turned Out to Grass*

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took the baby as soon as ever he came and went away with him into a sort of mist. If they had lived, Blaisdell would hardly have begun to think of retiring from business at forty-nine; there would have been too much to work for. Decidedly, Lucy must have no worries.

"There's the moon," said Harkness. "Looks like a fire, doesn't it? She'll be up directly. You can make out the rim now."

The great red bubble swelled up over the edge of the trees.

"You don't get tired of these things. If it weren't so dusty, the night would be perfect. 'Sh!—look there—by the fence—by gracious! Do you suppose he heard?"

In the faint shimmer of moonlight they saw that what they had taken for one of those slim graveyard cedars was a man leaning against the fence, his face turned toward the valley, while Moses curled about his feet.

"Good evening, Mr. Van Ander," called Harkness. "Fine night."

"Yes," came dully. "But we need rain."

"Have a cigar?"

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### *Interventions*

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"Oh—it's you, is it?"

The figure hesitated, its head bent toward them, but it was too dark to see the eyes; then shambled away without further remark than a kind of weary grunt, Moses trotting silently after, forgetful that there had been a change of masters.

"I don't," said Harkness, "seem to find any further pleasure here."

"He couldn't be going to the house to bother Lucy?"

"He's never been inside yet. Still—let's get the mint and go back. I can smell it hereabout."

By the light of a match they made out to gather a few handfuls of the rough, fragrant leaves, and then turned back, the toads scuttling out of their way with a dry rustle and flop into the grass. On one side of them was the resigned, incessant lament of a whippoorwill, on the other the tremulous screech of an owl, and there was a furtive melancholy in the parched, sullen air of the midsummer night, which centred to their distressed imagination in the shambling figure ahead of

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### *Turned Out to Grass*

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them, whose way took him past lighted windows that used to be his own, past the perfume of an orchard where he might now enter only as a thief, though the trees were of his own planting.

They saw him on a rise of ground against the sky, plodding and sorrowful, heard his footsteps for a moment; then the wind took the leaves and with their insistent rustle obscured other sounds.

But when they reached the box hedge, there he stood with elbows on the gate, intent upon the shadowy bulk of masons' paraphernalia set out upon the disordered lawn. He pointed a finger that shook with anger.

"It's none of my business, but them fellows o' your'n got their bags of cement right onto my wife's lily-o'-the-valley bed. I don't care about the flowers myself, but I supposed all proper womenfolks did;" and with this innuendo against Mrs. Harkness, whose pleasant profile at that moment passed the window, intent on some little fragment of household business, Mr. Van Ander took his dark way down the hill to his daughter's

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*Interventions*

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house and the hot, unsavory attic, whence the lights of his old house would be visible until he slept, and its roof the first thing he would see in the fresh gray and pink of the morning.

"We might move that cement," said Blaisdell, eying doubtfully the pile of twelve bags, each of them of the bulk and more than the weight of a man.

Harkness groaned. "No. It might as well be that as anything else. The drouth had killed the plants, anyway, and there's so little space just here to put things. They'll probably come up another year. The cement won't be there more than a week, anyway. Last week we had to take down a vine so that the men could break in for the dormer. We didn't hurt it any more than we could possibly help. It will be as good as ever in a year or two; but he came up and watched. 'It's none of my business, but I planted that creeper myself, thirty year ago, when I was first married.' I couldn't get it into his head that I wasn't hurting it."

"Why don't you send her to the shore or

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*Turned Out to Grass*

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somewhere until this business is over? Perhaps he'll settle down when the building is done. Of course that keeps him riled."

"You couldn't budge her with dynamite. She's in love with the place, and thriving like a weed."

"I think, in your place, I'd budge *somebody*."

But Harkness responded with the placidity of experience, "You don't know her."

The voice of a phonograph suddenly cut through the night, from the direction in which the old man had gone, dominating all the smaller raspings of insects like some brazen cicada:

"Way down upon the Suwanee Ribber—"

"Yes," said Harkness, dryly, "they've been getting all the latest improvements down at Goneril's since Van Ander's money went to live there. The phonograph is new. Last week it was a crayon enlargement of her photograph. She wanted me to come down and give my opinion as an artist."

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*Interventions*

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"You went?"

"Yes. You get to wondering where the old boy will bring up. You are unwholesomely attracted to the scene of his sufferings the way people are attracted to the house where there has been a murder; not that there is anything about it different from other houses of that class—a little grimmer and less home-like, maybe,—not much. The portrait was about what she deserved."

"All up an' down de whole crea-tion,"

snarled the phonograph.

When it had delivered all the verses of the "Suwanee River," it took up in succession "Home, Sweet Home," "Old Black Joe," and "My Old Kentucky Home"; and having sung them all, began at the beginning and went through them again.

Blaisdell, kept awake by the clamor, lit a cigar, and sat on the window-ledge in the moonlight, considering with some wonder that country people were, after all, born to trouble as the sparks fly upward, just like

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### *Turned Out to Grass*

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city people. It seemed odd that it should be so, looking at the delicate glimmer of the moonlight on the stirring leaves. Did beauty make no difference, then? And if he fled the city, as he had planned, would Black Care follow on? Would he wish, like Van Ander, to buy back his humdrum content?

“O-oh, Nellie was a La-ady,  
La-a-ast night she died,”

jeered the machine.

It croaked far into the night, for Goneril was entertaining company; and it was not until after eleven that it ended with a grand bray of “Nearer, My God, to Thee.”

But silence came at last, and he fell asleep. Once, toward morning, Moses lifted his voice and clanked his chain. But his alarmed threats changed quickly to appealing whimpers, a regular thudding indicating that his tail, in violent agitation, was whacking his kennel. “Van Ander,” thought Blaisdell, sleepily, and drowsed off while wondering



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*Interventions*

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whether he had curiosity enough to get up and peep at this midnight colloquy between the old man and his dog.

"The little dogs and all,  
Tray, Blanch and Sweetheart, see, they bark at me,"

he quoted in his dream, and thought he was watching Lear on the stage, and that Goneril wore a blue silk shirt-waist, and objected to dogs.

Harkness's insistent hand on his shoulder woke him. At first he was indignant to see the sunrise color still in the sky, then suddenly became alert and cool, and very wide-awake. Harkness was stammering and shivering.

"You've got to help me. I—I cut him down, but he was already cold, so I've locked the door——"

"What!"

"It's a way f-farmers have. I've read of such things, and I ought to have known. Th-they are always hanging themselves in barns."

Blaisdell dressed with speed.

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*Turned Out to Grass*

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"You're sure you locked the barn door? And Lucy?"

"She has waked up and will be getting breakfast. She'll want to go and hunt for eggs."

"I'll get the eggs," said Blaisdell, quickly, "and hitch up the horse at the same time. Keep close watch on the house while I get ready. I'll take her and the kids on a picnic for the day. You'll be free then to—see to things. The workmen will be coming—and Goneril and Regan, I suppose. To-morrow morning, by the first train, I'll take Lucy and the kids to the shore. I know of a cottage. And they needn't know—not for a long time, anyway——"

The farm looked as peaceful as ever when Blaisdell, anxious-eyed, drove up that evening with his happy carriageful of picnickers.

Harkness, pale and tired, nodded reassuringly. The barn door stood innocently open. The only thing not quite right was the strange humor of Moses, who sat chained

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### *Interventions*

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at his kennel door, howling—long, strange, wild cries.

The next morning as Blaisdell sat in the train with the Harkness two-year-old, heavy and pliant with sleep, in his arms, and the rest of the two seats overflowing with jubilant Harknesses, he gravely considered, as he had done before, that Walter had too much artistic temperament to take care of such a handful of humanity as this without being supervised himself. Never in the world, no matter how famous he became, would he lay by enough to see them all properly through school and college and to steady them for their first bout with the world. The hermitage, therefore, must be put off for awhile. What were childless old folk for, anyway? The post of uncle was an important one, and of much responsibility.

Moreover, since beholding that grim old bit of clay in the barn, he had somehow lost his eagerness to throw up his occupation. How could he know that he would take to a useless pasture life any better than old Van

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### *Turned Out to Grass*

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Ander had done, who had been so jolly a few months before about being turned out to grass? "Better wear out than rust out,"—the proverb sounded menacing. Content and idleness might not go together, after all.

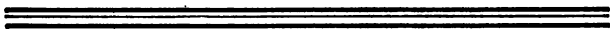
That dusty office, ugly and tiresome—one might miss it badly. Who would feed the mouse that lived at the back of his lowest desk-drawer and had nibbled important papers until he had substituted worthless ones? The hoarse noise of Wall Street, the flock of pigeons making military evolutions about the tall buildings, the sinuous flight of ticker-tapes—was it for things like these that one might become very homesick, just as another had done for orchards and fields no longer his?

As the train began to be invaded by the more lifeless air of the town, he squared his shoulders and sat up straight. He was going back to harness and plough. Blessed be drudgery, that keeps a man's mind clean and sane!





BY THE SAWYER  
METHOD





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BY THE SAWYER  
METHOD

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HENRY WALKER woke on a lovely July morning with an undefined sense of calamity upon him. It was late, for the clear ripple of sunlight on the wall had journeyed as far as a certain engraving which showed a lion in active pursuit of a gazelle, both of them small, eager, and lonely figures set forth in a waste of desert—the problem of supply and demand reduced to lowest principles. “You’re my meat,” says the lion, and the proposition stands without argument.

The window of Mr. Walker’s bedroom gave upon the roof of the summer kitchen, and so usually possessed the disadvantage of admitting a multitude of domestic sounds, from the light staccato of beaten eggs to the dull roar of grinding coffee, not to mention the strident conversation of two maids and a man; but on this morning, still bemused with sleep, gazing with perplexity at the leap-



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ing lion and wondering what had gone wrong and where, he suddenly remembered that the trouble lay in the lack of those unpleasant sounds which he had so often cursed in his haste.

He sat up in bed with a sigh, his long, simply clad figure bent with discouragement, his disordered thick hair grasped firmly in both hands. Then a sound did come up—the sound of grinding, but feeble and slow, as if the crank were turned with a weary and unaccustomed arm, yet patient and long-continued. “Damn!” said Walker, and made such haste for his bath and subsequent trousers as put the hurrying lion to shame.

“I told you,” he said, entering the kitchen with a brush still grasped in either hand, “that I’d get breakfast myself.”

“Now, will you please,” said Mrs. Walker, “go straight back to bed and not come bothering? I can get breakfast once in a way, I should hope. Go along, or I shall be cross. I can feel it coming on now.”

But there is nothing in all this world so

hard to persuade or drive as a man who has found his way to a kitchen whence servants have departed. Mrs. Walker dished up a stringy and discolored quantity of stirred egg, some ragged toast, a cereal that was both watery and lumpy, and with these scurried to the dining-room, and ranged them upon the unset table, which was trailed with marks of the previous evening's water-glasses and crumbs.

The two Walkers sat down to a dispirited meal. "I suppose," sighed Mrs. Walker, "the best thing to do is to go straight to Ellis Island and get a man and his wife who can't speak American. I got this last precious outfit. It's your turn now. If I had my life to live over again I'd go to cooking school instead of college. Still, I didn't suppose I'd marry—at least, not you."

"You could go to cooking school now," said her husband, with a timid gleam of hope, but she appeared not to hear.

"You'll have to pump before you start for New York," was her sinister reminder as she gathered up the dishes and departed for the

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kitchen. "There are only two inches of water in the tank."

The pump-house, romantically draped with trumpet-vine, stood at a little distance from the main building. Therein, clad in red and black paint, with brass trimmings, dwelt the stumbling-block of a long series of Mikes and Johns. Walker with exasperation had estimated that the care of it took up, first and last, a third of a man's time. Upon Mike's sudden and inebriated departure the day before, he had toiled at the thing himself, and now he found the door open and the floor strewn with cinders and oil as Mike, at his worst, would never have dared to leave it. While he stood ashamed before these traces of his incompetency, a harsh voice addressed him from a dark corner.

"There!" it said.

A lop-sided crow hopped down from the wood-pile, where it had been occupied with something strangely limp and downy. Walker took a quick step forward.

"You black rascal," he thundered, "you've been at the chickens!"

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"There!" admitted Billy Crow with hoarse complacency, dancing strange steps; but as he danced, Walker felt his wrath quietly transmuted into not only respect, but envy. Had not Billy—as a crow—done better with his difficulties than the Walkers as human beings were doing with theirs?

Turning over to Billy the remains of the chicken, Walker unskilfully built the fire under the pump, and that machine having at length started off upon a more or less even trot, he came out, perspiring, to rest. As he bent his long frame to a sitting posture, Billy mounted his shoulder like one of Wotan's ravens, and spoke at length and with seeming coherence, using plentiful "There's" and much wing gesticulation. Walker heard him through, but shook his head sadly at the end.

Billy impatiently tore the pipe from Walker's lips and flung it on the path, then swaggered off to bury what was left of his chicken, tucking it up with leaves and placing a neat headstone with artistic flourishes.

The day was beginning to droop, though

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it was not yet nine o'clock. Mrs. Walker came slowly up from the garden, her yellow head capped by a big rhubarb leaf, for she could never remember her hat until the sun reminded her of the necessity for it. There were raspberry stains about her mouth, her shirt-waist was open in an untidy V at the neck, and she waved another rhubarb leaf for a fan. She sat upon the kitchen steps and grimly eyed her husband across a barrier of withering sunshine.

"I wish all your hats were like that," he called languishingly, but she was in no mood for a flirtation.

"It's going to be hot," she coldly answered, and went in to close the blinds.

Now, it was at this unlikely moment, apparently without any connection whatever, that the great Walker idea burst full-fledged from that gentleman's brain. Perhaps it was the stretch of whitewashed lattice-work that screened the clothes-yard from the rest of the grounds and caught the light blindingly, combined with Billy Crow's dragging a few of his simple playthings from their hiding-

places—a spool, a match-box, half of a pair of scissors— Did Walker's great necessity and perplexity subliminally seize upon these chance materials, and leap with them to a solution? Or was it that Billy Crow's long and wise harangue after a short period of incubation in Walker's brain induced cerebration, although it had been spoken in so strange a tongue? There is something not quite right about a crow.

However that may be, this is the shape the vision took. There was a fence, very high and very long, a boy, and a pail of white-wash. Then he saw the boy sitting at one side, while other boys strove for the brush and the pail and the fence, and, at last, a long fence shining with three perfect coats of white-wash, while the first boy counted his wealth—buttons, spools, a kitten with one eye, a dead rat, and a string to swing it with— How did that immortal list run?

He went quickly into the house and returned with a bulky blue volume, decorated with gold lines and illustrated with the worst of wood-cuts. In this he read, mechanically

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### *Interventions*

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warding off Billy's frantic efforts to tear out the pages. The fire went out and the pump chug-chugged into silence; still he read on, absorbed, sober, weighing carefully as he went

*"Tom surveyed his last touch with the eye of an artist, then he gave his brush another gentle sweep and surveyed the result, as before. Ben ranged up alongside him.*

*"Hello, old chap, you got to work, hey?"*

. . . . .

*"What do you call work?"*

*"Why, ain't that work?"*

*"Tom resumed his whitewashing and answered carelessly:*

*"Well, maybe it is, and maybe it ain't; all I know is it suits Tom Sawyer."*

Without waiting to clean the pump, Walker went back to the house, reading as he went, Billy Crow flopping at his heels.

"Maybe it is and maybe it ain't," he whispered, as he patiently surrounded his

perspiring neck with a stiff collar. "At least it's worth a trial."

The asphalt was sticky with the perspiration of a big sullen city in July, but if there was comfort anywhere at the dull, warm end of the day, it was surely in the dining-rooms of the Mermaid, where Walker entered after a day in a library. Electric fans droned in every corner or wheeled their dizzy paddles above the tables, and a delusion of coolness had been sought by changing the color of the candle-shades from red to green. Fresh from the distraction of his disintegrated ménage, Walker regarded the prim tables and the prim maids with a wistful but also a calculating eye, ordered cold consommé, and languidly unfolded his evening paper. But as he read the headlines, it was with an occasional sly flicker of attention to his surroundings, as you may have seen a fox affect to sleep with his brush curled over his face. Looking more closely, you see the glitter of an ambushed yellow eye through the edge of the fur.



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Mr. Walker was the possessor of a kind of delicate and austere fame. His own idea was that he was more or less of a fraud, a belief in which, for his soul's good, his wife encouraged him.

Usually he fled, blushing, from admiration, avoiding such places as the Mermaid Club, where lay the greatest danger of the sidelong whisper, the covert stare, the too eager return of his nod. But now that he was about to brazenly trade upon his disquieting fame, the discomfort of it for a moment ceased to prickle. He spooned out the amber jelly of his consommé and read head-lines, quite at ease. At his right a tableful of women discussed, more distinctly than time and place actually required, their individual relations with various publishers: "I told Mr. ——" one would say with an air of angry decision, yet with a sly glance to see what audience she had beside the one addressed, and the audience knew the large name, to be sure, but also knew it for the only part of the sentence that really mattered. Walker the Great, however, worked too hard

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*By the Sawyer Method*

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over his own little phrases to think scornfully of any struggler in his own profession, and his reply to the effusive bows of these strenuous sisters of the pen was blandly kind and respectful.

At his left, with eyes in the ends of the earth, a dark and haughty young man discussed absinthe, and at long intervals scribbled words upon a pad. Here, for a little, Walker's attention lingered, and when the sombre eyes returned from the ends of the earth met them with a timid bow. The answering salutation was given with the sternness of one superior to another—deep calling unto deep. Walker, scared and discouraged, dived swiftly back into his soup.

“I couldn't talk pump to *him*. Tom Sawyer himself couldn't. Yet I'll bet he lives on sardines and crackers in a furnished room six days in the week.”

The place was now filling rapidly, and Walker's eyes were busy. There were a number of young men who looked as if they needed a country vacation, but some of these he knew to be prosperous, and others had

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### *Interventions*

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written things which the essayist's fastidious taste rejected violently as his wife would have thrown outdoors a scented cake of soap.

Yet, as in a world of words he held that the right one could always be found and made to fit if one were patient, so in a world of men surely the right one for a certain purpose was bound to turn up in time.

From the other side of the room, a mirror mercilessly gave him back himself—gaunt, tumultuous-haired, and spectacled. He squirmed this way and that, finally moving his fern centrepiece in such a way that he need see nothing of himself but the unruly hair when he looked up, for he loved beauty and never looked in the glass if he could help it.

Hardly had he arranged the fern to his liking when two other reflections entered the mirror and sat down at the reflection of the table behind him. One was that of a pale young man whom he knew to have done rather good verses and out-door articles. He also placed him—but rather vaguely—as

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*By the Sawyer Method*

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connected with some newspaper. The girl's face was familiar, too, but he was longer in remembering where he had seen that. It finally slid into place, against the sage-green curtain of a picture-gallery. She had looked for so long at a picture there that she seemed as fixed as the ladies of paint, and at last he had gone over and stood behind her to discover what picture it was that could win from her that long and dreamy half-smile, and so had found himself looking up a road that led to a tiny gray cottage; beyond it, a vague and serious evening sky, a rim of mountains, and a feather of new moon. The cottage itself you would hardly have detected but for its lamp—making the window a yellow square. Now, in this picture there was a peculiar kind of magic, for whoever looked at it believed that it was his own house that he saw, and that the guardian of the lamp was the one dearest to him, even though that one were dead. Since then he had gone up that allegorical road and acquired his wife and his home. Now he saw the shine of a wedding-ring upon the girl's finger, and

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### *Interventions*

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hoped that she also had attained the window light of her desire.

Cleeve—by an effort he had disentangled the young man's name—had a kind, honest sort of face, though it seemed thin and ill, and the two smiled at each other companionably enough. But was it as happy and confident a smile as one wishes to see in the faces of the newly married? Was there not something forced—dispirited?

Perhaps newspaper work was not paying well; perhaps one or both of them had been writing a novel, and hoping enormous things which did not happen. In his interest he so far forgot his caution that presently he saw his own spectacles and fox-colored hair poking up over the reflection of the fern-dish, and straightway dodged down, but the furtiveness of the act recalled him to his purpose in coming to town. Almost he thought he heard a hoarse voice at some faint, spiritual distance, urging: "There!" and the suggestive flutter of a cropped wing at his ear.

"If we could only get a thunder-storm," sighed a sweet but plaintive voice behind

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*By the Sawyer Method*

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him, "it would cool things a little—and save lives, I suppose. Just think of the tenement babies!"

"You'll feel better after you've eaten something." The man's voice was anxious, but encouraging.

"Oh!" the reply came brightly, "I don't mind it a bit. Really, I don't. I'm just a little dull, that's all—and sorry for people who can't come to a pleasant place like this to-night. How lovely it is!"

Walker thought it a very ordinary place, yet, glancing about with newly awakened attention, he seemed to remember how once it had appeared rather beautiful to him also. But that had been when he lived alone and very poor in the hall bedroom that has replaced the attic as a poet's starving-place. Perhaps some similar contrast made it now seem lovely to the girl.

"If we could only come oftener!" said the husband. But she, bravely: "I believe with a little study I can arrange a *ménage* in our room that will astonish you. Besides, I'm going to get up some more specimens and take

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### *Interventions*

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them around to the magazines. I haven't half tried yet."

"Damn newspaper work!" he gritted out; "to think of being dropped like this—*now!*"

Walker crouched lower and peered around one side of the fern-dish. The young man's head was dropped in his hands, while she, leaning toward him, appeared, by the motion of her lips, to be whispering—by the expression of her face the words were love words. The boy cleared his throat gruffly and sat up, shamefacedly.

"Oh, it'll come out all right," Walker heard.

"I wouldn't mind if it was just me, but I'm damned if I'll have my wife support me—and in this damned heat—you look like a ghost."

"It's lovely here just for the moment, anyhow," comforted the girl. "Let's talk about something that doesn't need damning. Isn't it something—" the words fell so low that the unprincipled eavesdropper could not be sure, but he thought he heard—"that we've got each other?"

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*By the Sawyer Method*

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But the man was not to be beguiled from his perplexities.

"Things don't turn up if one goes away. I've got to hang around here, but if you would *only* take that sonnet money, and run up to the old farm and the folks for the rest of the season——"

There was a long silence, probably filled in by a look, but Walker's eyes were now glued to his paper, although the type danced and blurred.

"If you think," came at last, very low, "I can be well—or—or happy anywhere except——"

In the lion's pursuit of the gazelle there is perfect frankness as to his ultimate purpose, but a man's methods of arriving at any point are as complex as the desire itself, and both method and purpose are clouded with obscurities until he forgets half the time what he is really after. Now, with quicker breath and a beating heart, Walker sought with himself how to make his spring and seize his prey. The first point was to get into easy, affable conversation. That accomplished,



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he did not see how it was possible for the great Sawyer method to fail. Yet he trembled. However nonchalantly he managed, would they not suspect him of having heard exactly what he had heard—and was a cur to have heard, for he could easily have rattled his newspaper or moved his chair so as to have drowned the quiet, troubled voices?

But his two victims did not hurry with their dinner, though the time seemed short to Tom Sawyer's disciple, who saw opportunity slip softly through his fingers while he read and reread unintelligible head-lines, his pulses dancing, like those of a scared actor who does not know his part.

It was with a dry throat and a prickling scalp that he finally cast upon the floor his dearest cigar-holder, causing it to roll quite under the table of the unsuspecting gazelles.

In the confusion following the plunge, however, he somewhat recovered himself. The fact that the amber mouth-piece was broken gave a touch of plausibility to the action which almost consoled him for the ca-

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*By the Sawyer Method*

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tastrophe. He could appear irritated, voluble, and witty on the subject of cigar-holders, different brands of cigars, tobacco in general—thence call Cleeve by his name and jump directly into literature as such, so hitting his victim where he lived.

He and Cleeve had each other's names, and he was introduced to Mrs. Cleeve before he had fairly ceased his petulant attempt to fit the pieces of amber together, and before he knew it he had given Cleeve a cigar, lit his own, wheeled his chair about to their table, and transferred his coffee.

"I'm doing it," he thought triumphantly, and the febrile flutter at his wrists subsided to the more even but vigorous beat of the confident chase.

As to the gazelles, they stammered and smiled nervously, and were so flattered by his attention and so servilely anxious to have him think well of them that ordinarily he would have turned tail at once. But he knew well, from long past experience of his own, what wonders weariness and hope delayed and anxiety for the welfare of one's best-

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beloved will accomplish in the way of disintegrating self-respect.

So he plumed and strutted, and paraded his best anecdotes for these two poor starvelings. With great and prosperous ones he remained mum and blushing from soup to liqueur; but now before the Cleeves he showed off as he ought to have done in high places, and gently, inexorably, he swept the conversation to the topic of farming. He made them see the sun rise and set from his broad verandas; he directed their noses to the fragrance of the rose that twined about the kitchen window, and dwelt appetizingly upon what sort of grape crop might be expected from the Concord and Delaware vines that festooned his pergola. He touched upon his library, and the quiet coolness of it for writing and thinking in while the bees droned in the clover field that came clear up to its windows. Then he took them down to where he had persuaded a brook to make a swimming pool at the edge of his woods. He drew as cruel a contrast as he could to the July of the city whose breath was all about them,

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and brought to bear all his considerable skill with words.

"And yet," he plaintively concluded, "I always suspect that my man is getting the best of it. He sees the sun rise while I snore. He is the unappreciative confidant of all the hopes and fears of my young incubator chickens, it is to him that my cow lows at the bars when she wants to be milked, and—and he has the fun of—of—" He looked deeply into his coffee, and muttered indistinctly, "running the pump."

After this wild tribute to his pump, he fell silent and abashed, but presently, making sly observation with the tail of his eye, and seeing nothing but the rapt wistfulness that he had been striving to bring to his hearers' faces, he took heart and went on.

"In the country," said Walker, "it is singular what a dignity and desirability attaches to working with the hands. If I had time to do it myself, I should never hire a man to work for me, but there it is! Division of labor means separation of intellectual labor and menial labor. The ideal arrangement

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### *Interventions*

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of course, would be that my man should enjoy an hour or two in my library while I spell him at the lawn-mower. I don't, however, suggest it to him, and am timid about the lawn-mower lest I lower myself in his esteem. Discipline must be maintained, even though a man who can't appreciate it gets all the real fun out of my farm. I speak in the present tense. He went yesterday, and for a brief period I am my own master. The time of Utopian co-operation is not yet," sighed Mr. Walker wistfully. There was a long silence. He looked fixedly at his cigar and hardly dared to breathe.

"Why shouldn't it be possible?" said Cleeve earnestly, and Walker jumped at the sound of his voice. "Not generally, of course, but surely there are groups of people here and there who could live and work together by some agreement such as you suggest."

Walker daintily flicked some cigar-ashes from his knee.

"Very probably," he assented, and appeared to have lost interest in the subject.

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*By the Sawyer Method*

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"We are beginning to need rain badly," he ventured, but Cleeve was not so to be shaken off.

"You were speaking of co-operation. It is the steady plowing that ruins the race-horse. Just a little now and then, and turn and turn about, wouldn't hurt him—I should think——"

"And there," objected Walker, "you have the worm in the bud of socialism. We presuppose the willingness of every man to do his share of the common labor. Practically, he'd do something else."

"No—no—" argued the poet, "it wouldn't do to let the whole race in on such a scheme, but picked men in a favorable environment—men who weren't doing it for wages, but partly for exercise and partly to pay their way while—while they worked on some scheme of their own——"

"I don't know that I've gone so far as to formulate a scheme." Walker lost interest more and more as Cleeve waked up. "But as you set it forth, it sounds attractive enough," and with that he rose, shook hands

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### *Interventions*

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warmly with them both, and went to the reading-room.

But he held *Fliegende Blätter* with a shaking hand. When, after an interval, an uncertain step hovered upon the threshold, he felt the blood rushing to his cheeks like a girl who hears the step of a lover. He smiled, turned a leaf, and waited.

"I was very much interested, Mr. Walker, in our conversation about the country and—co-operation. I should like to continue it, if I might, without taking too much of your time."

But Walker was true to his master.

"I have to make my train, but should be delighted to hear your ideas until then."

Cleeve seemed to cast about hurriedly for some fine impersonal attitude with which to disguise his eagerness, but found nothing to his hand.

"I don't know that I have any ideas of value," he began timidly, then blurted out, "but I'd like to join some such scheme as you were speaking of—and if we could have

your man's quarters until you get somebody more capable, why"—he laughed awkwardly—"I think I could mow the lawn and hoe the potatoes."

Walker simulated first surprise, then doubt, then, gradually and conservatively, conviction.

"It might work," he conceded, "especially as you could have the library evenings. I do all my work in the morning."

"I'd appreciate a chance like that more than I can tell you. Where we are now, somehow—I can't seem to get at it——"

Walker's eyes gleamed. Yes, it was hard to write in a hall bedroom. But he was deliberate and played his game.

"I rather expect there'll be a number of applications if I ever really get that community of mine started. You see—the post of cook is vacant also. In fact, we are *quite* alone—and," a spasm of honesty took him, "that pump I spoke of is rather a nuisance. I don't want to deceive you."

"My wife"—Cleeve swallowed hard—"my wife is a first-rate cook. She says she



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gets homesick for a good kitchen. We are in a furnished room now. I think in a scheme like yours I shouldn't mind her trying her hand. As for your pump—" he smiled anxiously, "I ought to have been a mechanic anyhow, but I got one or two things accepted when I was green from college and thought I was a genius, so I went into newspaper work."

"I wonder," Walker said, "whether you and your wife can come out with me to-night?"

"I'll go tell her," chuckled the boy, darting off to whatever dark corner of suspense it was in which he had bestowed the girl to await the outcome of his daring adventure.

Walker, alone and triumphant, rose to his lank height and stretched his arms restfully: "There!" said he.

## II

Mr. and Mrs. Walker, hand in hand, went thoughtfully up the moonlit hill, their shadows, lank and portentous, preceding them

along the pallid road; the dark fields glittered with incessant fire-flies and a whip-poorwill, like an ill-regulated cuckoo clock, numbered unlimited hours. But they were yet far from the crest of the hill, the usual goal of their nightly walks, when Mrs. Walker disengaged her hand, and without feeling of the grass to see if it was wet, or directing him to light a match and make sure there was no poison ivy about, sank wearily upon a way-side stone. Mr. Walker made no other comment than to assume the Napoleonic attitude of meditation, and smoke silently toward the moon. Schneider, their dog, having awaited them some moments in the usual place hurriedly returned to seek them, fearing the worst, but finding them both alive and well, stretched his mongrel bulk, with an exclamation of relief, equidistant between them. Mrs. Walker's voice when she spoke was full of trouble.

"She is certainly a wonderful cook."

Her husband heartily assented. "Rather!" But there was something—a clang, a false note, under the words of both; an acknowl-

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### *Interventions*

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edgment that there was much still to be said. Argument was in the air, not to say dismay.

"If she only wouldn't work so hard," went on Mrs. Walker. "If she'd only let me help a little!"

"Wants to live up to her contract, I suppose," said Walker unhappily. "It was nominated in the bond—housework was."

"That's no reason why she should kill herself over a hot stove baking bread such weather as this. And I never asked her to put up fifty-seven varieties of preserves, nor to wash and iron the napkins twice a week, because we haven't enough to change three times a day. And she oiled the floors yesterday. *He* ought to have done that, if anybody. But she sneaked in and had it done before he finished mowing the lawn."

"By the way," said Walker, in a slow, thoughtful, suspicious tone, "who pumped this morning?"

"Why—didn't he?"

"If he did it's the first time he forgot to let the water from the jacket of the engine. The

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*By the Sawyer Method*

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pump was left too hot, and the fire wasn't drawn. Just about the way a woman might do it, I should think. The pump house itself was beautifully swept and garnished, and—there's a fresh curtain in the window. Besides——”

The pause was long and full of expression. —“Well?” asked his wife sharply.

“Well, I found him asleep in the library, at six, the light burning, and ‘Chapter X’ written at the top of a page otherwise blank. I put out the lamp and went to see about the pump, and I thought I heard some sort of ghostly flight, rustling away behind the raspberries. There was a pink sunbonnet on the same nail with the lantern. It was gone half an hour afterward. It wasn't yours, I take it?”

“Indeed no.” Her tone was meek and self-accusing. Mrs. Walker's incompetency as a house-keeper was a thorn in that lady's flesh which almost—but not quite—stirred her to action. Some day, she was always predicting, she would suddenly become capable and brisk, take the helm of Walkerdome and guide that crazy craft like a real ship of state;

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### *Interventions*

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meantime, she greeted her days with good-natured yawns, and spent them in slothful content among her husband's books. She planted and weeded a scrap of garden, it is true, and so made a small show of rather unnecessary industry, but the conduct of the house was a matter of humble perplexity. In fact the woman was domestically a failure, and this lack of hers had already not only plunged the Walkers into a series of picturesque domestic misadventures, but marked them out to be the victims of many more.

"So she pumped, did she?" said Mrs. Walker impatiently. "I wondered why she looked so hot and ill at breakfast. I suppose she thinks that novel of his is bound to make their fortune. . . . What do *you* think? Has he really got it in him?"

Walker, a literary person himself, snorted with contempt for his craft. "Any man who hasn't got a 'best-seller' bottled up in him somewhere these days is a paranoiac. But don't go to underrating poor Cleeve. I shouldn't be a bit surprised if he turned out something not so bad. . . . Anyhow, he

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*By the Sawyer Method*

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looked such a kid, with his 'Chapter X' and his cigarette stubs strewed over the rug; and he snored in such a wholesome, hard-working way. Remember he's only twenty-five. What were we at twenty and twenty-five—I fancy you'd have pumped for me—then."

She slipped her hand in his with a sigh that meant many things.

July ended with sullen and muggy drouth. The first fortnight of it was dry and still. Then came a nervous spattering of storm—thunderous approaches that promised much but passed with nothing better than a few feeble drops that dried as they came.

The Walker well failed day by day; its first dry hiss of warning occurred after a forty minute pumping, and this would not have been so bad, but the forty minutes shrunk to half an hour, to twenty minutes, to fifteen—and at fifteen remained. This meant five pumpings a day. Walker and Cleeve took turns at gaspingly providing the family with sufficient baths. Had they pumped a sixth time they might have saved the lawn,

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### *Interventions*

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but at least if the grass burned it would need no mowing, which was something; so they muttered to each other that they'd be damned first, and let it go at that.

Schneider, except as he wept and grovelled at the futile thunder, was more comfortable than the bipeds. Mornings he drowsed among the roots of the wistaria where he had made an excavation, scraping away each layer of earth as it became warmed through until the hole grew so deep that had he died at that time they could have used it for his grave. Afternoons he withdrew to the cellar and lay with his nose against the waste-pipe of the refrigerator.

But the two Walkers worrying together, agreed that they could have borne with philosophy the weather and their asinine water supply, had their kitchen been less faithfully served.

"Why does she insist on mayonnaise?" mourned Mrs. Walker, "when we could make French dressing at the table just as well? I like it better, anyway. And why does she insist on grinding and fussing up and

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*By the Sawyer Method*

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frying the cold meat into croquettes instead of giving it to us in slices?"

"'Twould be better for tummy," agreed Walker, "but those croquettes are most elegant stuff."

"And the idea of making cake when the baker's wagon passes the door every day! And you can buy all sorts of things in little boxes and tins."

So they both pleaded with their kitchen maid, but without avail. She told them she was having a good time, that she never felt better in her life and shooed them out of the hot spicy kitchen with a light-hearted enthusiasm that made them half believe her,—only that she grew white and big-eyed from day to day, and sat without appetite before her own concoctions. "I eat while I'm cooking, you know," she would explain with cheerful mendacity. "I get the lion's share before you see it."

If she had not been so pretty and delicately young! Mrs. Walker felt herself slowly, awkward, and faded by comparison, realizing more than ever how she had failed



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### *Interventions*

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in all those things that should concern a woman most. Yet once she had at least possessed youth, and enthusiasm of a sort, and had dreamed dreams of a home that was to be a home, and over which she would rule serenely, but—but— Here she lived in the house, and with the man of her desire, yet everything had degenerated until at best their happiness could hardly be called more than an arid complacency. She thought of these things long and often, the mental burden of them gathering weight as all burdens do in difficult weather, until her face sagged with age and discontent, and her voice grew sharp and peevish. But at twilight, when it was cooler, and the men sat on the veranda with their pipes, she would sneak up to her husband on that side of him least open to observation and slip her hand in his. At this he would rise—Schneider also, as if moved by the same spring—and the three would take their walk in the manner already indicated.

There had been a night of gasping, light-clad ghosts fluttering with fans from window to window, and upon this discomfort

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*By the Sawyer Method*

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had dawned a breathless morning. Pinned carelessly to the wall beside Mrs. Walker's dressing-table was a melancholy Burne-Jones print named "Love among the Ruins." Upon this the lady's eyes rested as she brushed out her heavy yellow hair, and the dusty sunlight gathered force at the unguarded window. It afforded her a melancholy satisfaction that this lank pair were in an attitude that indicated they were still pleased with each other in spite of the disorder of fallen walls and tangled vines. They were, in a way, a Mr. and Mrs. Walker, she was sure. That pre-Raphaelite female could never have kept house.

Her slothful dream was broken by Cleeve's voice, raised in amazement and terror, calling her name.

Upon the wax-clean kitchen floor lay that exasperating little cook, tragically limp and white, her blue gingham dress dabbled in a magnificent but uncooked omelet, which had spread into a yellow lake, dotted with islands of broken crockery. From the stove the frying-pan which had been about to re-

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### *Interventions*

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ceive it, sent up a column of pungent smoke. Meanwhile—"Love Among the Ruins." The young husband held his wife frantically to his breast, chafed her hands, marked with old and recent burns, and pattered all sorts of nonsense.

"Get away," said the stern lady with flowing yellow hair—"bring me water and some brandy."

That afternoon the storm came. Henry Walker, with his pipe and writing pad, the coward Schneider weeping between his feet, sat upon that side of the veranda which the slanting sheets of rain left dry, and serenely polished his little phrases until it grew so dark that he could make out his outrageous chirography only by the blue flashes of lightning. Then he put his work aside, re-filled his pipe, and leaned back smiling with gentle enjoyment of the uproar. Schneider, who was even better trained than Mrs. Walker to respect the sacredness of the pen in action, at the instant of its being laid aside, flung himself at his master's bosom, worked



an hysterical snout into his shirt until the cold nose actually touched flesh, and reminded him with tearful supplication that the end of the world being now come, mankind must see dog-kind safely through it for the sake of a friendship too old and honorable to perish with the planet.

What with the noises of the storm and Schneider, Walker did not know that his wife stood beside him until she touched his shoulder. Then he turned at once and asked "How is she?" but before finishing the question thrust the great dog aside and sprang up.

"There's nothing to worry about," she cried brokenly, her cheeks wet as though the rain had driven against them. . . . "Oh—some women are lucky. . . ."

And then she laughed a little through her tears, and told a tale which she had often told before, of how, during a black year of her unhappy childhood she had lived with a great-aunt who did not believe in dolls, and of how, during that nightmare time, the sight of other children with proper toys had caused such tears as those of which she was

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### *Interventions*

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just now guilty. . . . "and it wasn't that I was sorry *they* had nice things—" she defended herself. "And no more am I jealous of other women's babies—only—only——"

And then they sat silent for a long time, hand in hand, while the storm passed and left the sunset bare.

"You see," Mrs. Walker began, as the robins broke into rejoicing, turning their red breasts toward the late sun to dry, "you see, as long as we stay here, that girl will be bound to overwork. I can't make her realize the importance of being careful—young creatures like that are so foolish about—everything. But I think if it were just the two of them together she'd be more reasonable, particularly as he is pretty badly frightened, and I think will make her mind. In fact," said this very practical and scheming person, "I've thought it all over and I don't see what else we can do except go away. There's enough canned things to last them all summer, besides eggs and garden stuff, so they won't go hungry. Let them have their little honeymoon here. They haven't had an apol-

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*By the Sawyer Method*

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ogy for it, yet. I found out more this afternoon about the hard times they've had."

Walker looked out over his acres, now green and splendid in sunlit wetness, a thought regretfully.

"Have you—ah, have you thought just what is to become of us?" he asked. "I grant that your idea would be best for the Cleeves."

"Oh—we can get along, anyhow. . . . Let's camp out up in Keene Valley—just you and me. . . and let these kids take care of the farm. Anyhow, New Jersey's no place to spend the summer."

Walker looked at his wife doubtfully, then, trusting to that sense of humor which was her finest trait, he allowed his gaunt face to wrinkle into a large grin:

"So *that's* your solution of the servant problem?"

And the Cleeves in their "servants' quarters" were startled by the inextinguishable laughter of their master and mistress.





AT  
EPHESUS







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## AT EPHESUS

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BEFORE Dr. Winthrop had reached three-score he knew that the rest was to be but labor and sorrow. At first he made fluttered and restless plans to go to Montreal or New York and find out certainly from some other physician who could judge impersonally, but his purse was less than light. And, after all, he knew—of course he did. Had he not accompanied old Madame Moore and young Henry Sturgis along that road? Milestone after milestone, he knew it, and how there was no turning back. So, after a more careful scrutiny of his bank-book than he had given it for many years, he withdrew, as it were, just out of the patient's hearing, and having subdivided himself into three, patient, family physician, and consulting physician, impartially considered the case of a certain old army surgeon who had somehow taken a mortal hurt in his liver, and must be long in

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### *Interventions*

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dying. The subliminal third self thus consulted, shook his head in the manner assumed by physicians, since the memory of man runneth not to the contrary, to indicate an adverse opinion.

"But he won't be the first that's had to stand it," quoth this phantom oracle; then, mercifully: "Of course, toward the last there's morphine—when it gets too bad."

It was already pretty bad at times. Dr. Winthrop looked wistfully at the small aluminum case of the hypodermic syringe on the desk before him. But the Counselor, intercepting the look, spoke with great sternness: "Be sure the time has certainly come before you let him have that."

And Dr. Winthrop said: "I promise to be very sure."

One gives promises either to one's self or to another. Those given to one's self are subject to inextinguishable sophistries, and not to be relied upon in matters of moment. In making this promise, Dr. Winthrop fixed his eyes rather wildly on a picture in an oval black-walnut frame above his cabinet of in-

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*At Ephesus*

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struments. It was a faded, smiling photograph—a somewhat young and inexperienced face to play the part of Eikon in that grim and out-at-elbow little office, above so gray and worn a worshipper. Yet there may have been more strength in its invincible youth and ignorance than could have been afforded the little gentleman by some maturer idol. It is certain, at least, that he looked at it often and steadily during the next year or so, when its unwavering smile upheld him minute by minute during interminable evenings.

“Perhaps it isn’t enough just to die,” seemed to be her argument. “Perhaps, by suffering, one gains—something or other—out of proportion to what one endures. I’d love to tell you about it, but they won’t let me.”

A more tangible argument lay in the village people’s need. He knew, without pride, what comfort and safe counsel were to be had of him. Some of the houses that he daily passed were like tall ships piloted by him to their anchorage through dangers that had sunk many such.

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### *Interventions*

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Then there were the boys and girls he had ushered into life, guided through teething and measles, and whose confidence he held so utterly that the town was not, like so many of its size, an "awful place to bring up children." It is easy for young mariners to get a point or two off the course, and bring up in sorrowful "No Man's Land." And parents are apt to be fools. The mercy of the drug is insidious. It clouds one's judgment. His eyes being proven clearer than most, he must keep them so.

So the Doctor gave some thought to Jim Bludsoe, and his manner of staying at the wheel among flames. There is much in the feeling that one is in good company when beginning some lonesome, brave undertaking. He went through his morning paper for stories of heroism—engineers, ship-captains, firemen—and when among news of politics, murders, and society, he found a paragraph of the sort he was after, things were easier through the day; his shoulders would faintly imitate the old military carriage, and anxious patients, who had begun to see that

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*At Ephesus*

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something was wrong, would say: "You're looking better to-day, Doctor."

But at last came a time when the invisible counselor said, the matter being once more referred to him: "There's nothing to do now but to make him as comfortable as possible." The eyes of the picture also smiled consent, and it seemed agreed upon that the old army surgeon might now take his departure in honorable peace.

He did this with greater composure because of the arrival of Dr. Leonard, for whom he conceived such liking that within a month the new shingle was tacked below Dr. Winthrop's, and the young man's trunk stood in the upstairs bedroom which the invalid had given up, his nights as well as his days being now mostly passed in a great upholstered chair by the fireplace of the study adjoining the office.

Having thus bestowed the mantle of Elijah, the Doctor also entrusted to young Elisha the last rites of his own case, and settled down to the now brief business of dying with what ease and dignity he might.

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### *Interventions*

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To play solitaire, doze painlessly, and work fitfully at a translation of the second part of "Faust"—a task which he had long ago assigned to a happier old age than had fallen to his lot—these were now his occupations; the big chair, the reading table with its circle of light, and the fireplace, the scene of his activities.

Still, his mind was not altogether at ease about the morphine, to the distress of Dr. Leonard, who decided that long and heroic abstinence had induced a Quixotic habit of thought.

"Well, it isn't as if my bearing the pain could help anybody," Dr. Winthrop would say, justifying himself before he reluctantly accepted relief.

"You'd have given it to a patient long ago."

"Of course. But it's too damnably easy for doctors."

Yet when the first factitious glow of relief dwelt briefly in his poor nerves, the doubts would vanish for awhile.

"When I think what I escape, it al-

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*At Ephesus*

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most seems as if it made up for the evil it does."

And this to Dr. Leonard seemed better sense.

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By Christmas the village had ratified Dr. Winthrop's choice of a successor. Those who had unwillingly, since his sickness, gone over to the venerable homœopathist, Dr. Williams, or to young Cleighton, joyfully brought back their pains and aches to the small brick house where two signs now hung. They had found safety and wisdom under that roof for many years. This new young man could hardly go far wrong, they reasoned, so long as the town's High Priest still lived there to give him counsel. Moreover, the young Elisha was good to look upon, and had large measure of what the ladies enthusiastically called "magnetism." But this word has so long been deprived of its meaning through over-use and mouthing that it must be defined at length if it is to be understood. By these things you may know those who have it: if



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### *Interventions*

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an airless room becomes purified by their entering it; if, when you are afraid to die, something about them subtly convicts you of cowardice; if, when you are in great distress of mind as well as body, doubting which dark road-turning to take, everything cheerfully untangles while that cool, matter-of-fact touch is on your wrist.

Just as Dr. Leonard held the old-time practice of Dr. Winthrop nicely in his palm, diphtheria broke out in the schools like forest fire. It started, of course, in French Hollow. Any epidemic always began there, the people being weak and inferior—degenerate, perhaps—certainly having rather a hard time of it, first and last, for the children must go to the factories as soon as they learn the multiplication table, and they marry, as often as not, boy and girl, before sixteen.

In the Hollow was a primary school with seventy-five pupils, crowded three in a seat. It began with the littlest one of all who attended school for just a week, and spent most of her recesses in the young teacher's lap. Suddenly she came no more. When word was

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### *At Ephesus*

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brought that she was dead, the teacher cried, right before all the pupils. The next day she did not come to school herself, but instead there appeared a member of the board, with side whiskers and eye-glasses, who, holding a queer-smelling handkerchief before his face, briefly declared a vacation. The teacher was the first patient Dr. Leonard lost after he put out his sign.

Then followed two cases at the Academy on the Hill, and the town grew interested and more out of patience than ever with French Hollow, exhaling misfortune, and wickedness, and death upon them, from its humble position at their feet. "It's as bad as the city slums," they said.

Dr. Williams and Dr. Cleighton having been brought up in that region, partook of the town's prejudice against "Cajans" in general, so when the plague let loose upon the Hollow in all its dreadfulness, their share of the work was performed in a rather perfunctory way. Perhaps it would be fairer to say that none of their Hill patients was neglected.

But, however that may be, it is certain that for the most part it was Dr. Leonard who went to and fro in that poisonous and sorrowful Acadia. On the Hill there were nurses with caps, and aprons, and certificates, but not in French Hollow. Only Father Labelle, grim and ascetic, with but little English to his tongue, and with fiery hatred of all things Anglo-Saxon, would frequently come in as Dr. Leonard went out, and often took his turn at helping the body as well as the soul. At first this fierce little priest was superciliously civil to the physician, then he was haughty and would not speak, but toward the end he softened and warmed as only such natures can; and if souls are ever prayed into Heaven, that of Dr. Leonard will not escape salvation.

The limits of Dr. Winthrop's world now admitted but little more than his *Zweiter Theil*—his game of patience and his semi-waking sleep. No hint of any especial cause for anxiety in the world he was rapidly leaving ever reached him from Dr. Leonard.

"Everything going all right?" he would

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*At Ephesus*

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ask now and then with his kind, withered smile, and half forget the question before the cheerful answer came:

“First-rate, thank you.”

But Mrs. Shampine, the housekeeper, knew, and kept a hot meal ready for serving at any hour of the day or night. She had many relatives in the Hollow. The first distant tinkle of the sleigh-bells was a signal for heavy-footed haste in the kitchen.

One bitter day, at the four o'clock twilight, Dr. Leonard came in more wearily than usual, and, having made but sad work of his smile of greeting to the invalid, stood before the fire in sombre abstraction, holding his stiff hands to the blaze, while Mrs. Shampine's hurry resounded through the house. Dr. Winthrop, looking drowsily up from his cards, forgot for a minute the manœuvre which he was about to perform with the upheld ace. This and that began to fit together in his tired brain, until a thing that had troubled him for awhile that afternoon, and then faded into inconsequence with other troubles, returned with clamor.

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*Interventions*

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"Is there much sickness about, Oscar?" he asked in his faded voice.

"Some influenza just now."

He placed his ace and drew another card, but was not satisfied.

"There was a funeral," he said, "this afternoon."

Dr. Leonard gave him a quick, sidelong glance, tightened his mouth, and stared at the fire. Several cards fell softly into place.

"Who is dead?"

Dr. Leonard's foot touched a log, which rolled noisily forward on the hearth and demanded all his attention to keep it from burning the rug. When this was adjusted, there was much to do in brushing up the cinders. But Dr. Winthrop did not forget.

"Who was it, Oscar?"

The answer came slowly—

"A little girl—from the Hill."

"What little girl?"

The old man's voice hinted indignation. All the small undeveloped personalities of the town were as definite to him as to their own parents—some of them more so. He

never thought of them generically as "girls" or "boys."

"Letty Moore," said Leonard at last, softly.

Dr. Winthrop dropped his cards. His head sunk on his chest, his whole body became collapsed and feeble even beyond its habit.

"Letty Moore! How is that possible? Wasn't it yesterday she came in with her Christmas doll?"

"No, Doctor, that was two weeks ago."

Then Dr. Winthrop must have all the symptoms. He dragged them out, one by one. Dr. Leonard could prevaricate a little if the necessity were great, but the art of direct lying was forever beyond him. He gave up one bit of truth after another, miserably hoping that the obscured brain might not be able to put them together and name the total. But all the dozing faculties were waking now, and focusing. After brief pondering the question came sharply.

"Is it epidemic?"

"Is what epidemic?"

"Nightmare, of course."

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"It's nothing that we can't handle."

Dr. Winthrop tremulously cast off the afghan that was wound about his knees like a cocoon, and grasped the arms of his chair.

"Help me up."

He had risen before a hand could reach him, but after wavering an instant sank back into Leonard's arms.

"Miracles," he gasped, "are out of date."

"But we've really got it in hand," soothed Leonard, sick at heart. "Cleighton does pretty well, you know."

"Cleighton!"

"I never knew before how much I could get through in a day. It really is well covered, Doctor. Trust me."

"Oscar," said the old man very earnestly, "you must learn now how to be a machine. You must learn not to take it to heart when—they die. And Oscar—surely I don't need to caution you to be careful about—not to—no, there's no danger of that. But so many young men have wrecked themselves—overdrawn their accounts hopelessly. God help

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*At Ephesus*

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us doctors, with temptation always at our elbow!"

At this hint, Leonard looked away with a strange, veiled expression, which if the Doctor had seen it might have made him suspect that his warning was not so unnecessary as he had hoped; but his eyelids had drooped with pain and weariness.

"I shall use the best judgment I have," said Leonard rather harshly after a moment's silence.

Mrs. Shampine's sleek black head appeared. "Soopay ready, M'sieu," and Dr. Leonard hurried out.

He was gone hardly five minutes, yet when he returned hardly seemed in such haste as the swift disposal of his meal indicated, for he fell into meditation before the fire, his fur cap on his head, and his great-coat over his arm, remaining in that position so long that Dr. Winthrop looked up in perplexity. The drawn, miserable look had faded before the influence of a good warm meal. His eyes were now clear and honestly cheerful, his cheeks healthfully flushed, instead of pinched and



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*Interventions*

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purple with cold. It was wonderful, Dr. Winthrop thought—the recuperative power of youth—and, as he had done many times before, he admired, with half shut, drowsy eyes, the fine lines of the jaw and forehead, the self-reliant carriage of the shoulders, and the lean, capable fingers, lit up by the red glow of the fire. He was leaving his people in good care, he thought contentedly, and while he dwelt upon this idea the dreams enfolded him with that tender mist which was not sleep, but just a strangeness falling over familiar things—a quiet invasion from the world behind the barrier—ghosts that came and smiled and softly vanished. Letty Moore sat down on the rug with her doll, her feet straight out, and began to rebraid its fuzzy, yellow hair. The oldest ghost of all, his grandfather, in preposterous stock and shirt collar, ranged up beside Dr. Leonard before the fire, standing with his back to it, his feet wide apart, and his coat-tails spread to get the heat. Between these, the oldest and youngest, the air thickened with many others. How could they all find space—those

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*At Ephesus*

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young fellows in blue—some in gray! They swarmed in by regiments. Through these there entered a gracious presence. Entered? She was always there, but not always visible, young and smiling, and dressed in the fashion of the sixties. Why did she look at him so intently—why did her shadowy hand rest in that motherly way on Dr. Leonard's shoulder? She wanted to speak. Poor child, she often wanted to speak, but they would never let her.

Leonard stirred, beginning to draw on his overcoat, and the room was cleared of visions as a pool is cleared of reflections by a pebble cast, though the kind, dead hand on the living shoulder persisted strangely after the vanishing of other unreal things.

But even when the coat was on the young doctor lingered, smiling as if there were some pleasant thought that he must finish before going back to his patients.

Dr. Winthrop, waking more and more fully, found himself wondering—even a little indignantly—at the spontaneous cheerfulness. He would have him cool and coura-

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### *Interventions*

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geous; yet, was it natural to be—well—almost jolly, when little Letty Moore was hardly cold? But probably he had found a letter as well as a dinner. Letters from the right girl could do almost anything for a man. Once they had been able to render even the grim aftermath of battle less dreadful. Not that Dr. Leonard had ever admitted that there was a girl, but there always is one when a man is under thirty.

Leonard roused from his pleasant thoughts, and came over to arrange more conveniently the contrivances about the big chair. Then he went out whistling.

“I’ll be in by midnight,” he called back. “Good-by!” The snow crunched and squeaked under his feet as he ran down the walk to the waiting sleigh.

Mrs. Shampine brought in a bowl of broth.

“Did the doctor eat a good supper?”

“Nossir.” Her face was perplexed. “Me, I cooked ’em a good shicken, nice and hot. He jus’ tas’e ’em and push ’em away. But pretty soon ’e feel good, ’e say. Guess ’e had soopay somewheres else,” she hazarded with

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*At Ephesus*

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some resentment. "She was a nawful good shicken, her. But 'e don't eat nothing hardly at all these days."

"Were there letters to-day?"

"Nossir; jus' a paper."

An idea came to Dr. Winthrop slowly and heavily. It was so like the pain in its coming that he mistook it at first for that.

"You may go, thank you," he said to Mrs. Shampine. Then he put back, without tasting, the spoonful of broth which he had been about to take, and sat very still for a long time. He saw again the shadowy figure with its warning hand upon the broad shoulder.

"I have been very blind." He looked up at the picture. "Was it really you, my dear? If I could be sure of that it would make everything so simple and easy. Well, I shall know soon, and at any rate that doesn't affect the conclusion."

He took his hypodermic syringe out of its case and dropped it among the coals.

"God help us all," he whispered.

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### *Interventions*

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At midnight Dr. Leonard came back, heavy-eyed and with dragging feet, to find the fire dead, while on the hearth Dr. Winthrop lay in a moaning heap, grasping a handful of ashes and the broken hypodermic. Having quickly administered the delayed prescription with an instrument from his own vest pocket, the young man held his patient in his arms until the breath came easily and the groaning ceased. The first words dismayed him.

"Oscar, I'm—not going to use that—any more."

"What?"

"I can do what others have done."

Dr. Leonard looked sharply at the closed eyes and bit his lip. At last, speaking with professional cheerfulness, "Can't allow it, Doctor. You're my patient."

But the thing was too settled in Dr. Winthrop's own mind to allow of argument.

"It won't be long, you know."

They were silent for a while. The faint crackle of the lamp, whose oil was nearly spent; the soft touch of snowflakes on the

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*At Ephesus*

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window, and the irregular breathing of the two men, seemed loud in the room. Dr. Leonard's voice was low, almost timid, when he finally spoke:

"What has given you that notion, Doctor?"

The yellow hand sought the firm and healthy one, clasping it strongly.

"*You* know."

There was no reply. The pressure was not returned.

"I can't stand for that, Oscar."

Dr. Leonard broke out in fretful argument:

"It's only while this lasts. I—why, you don't think I'd take morphia just for myself! But what right have I to forego anything—*anything* that will make me stronger—that will make just the difference between pulling them through and not pulling them through?"

"It won't do."

"I've lost ten already. Ten in one week." He turned his face away.

"Ten!" repeated Dr. Winthrop sadly. Then he must know all the names. But when

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### *Interventions*

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nine were told off, including Letty Moore, Leonard stopped. The tenth name made difficulty in his throat.

"The tenth died an hour ago." Then, after delay—

"Rosalie St. Pierre. I worked hard. I was fool enough to pray."

"Perhaps such a pretty face is safer out of French Hollow."

"I'd have taken her out. I'd have married her."

The skeleton arm tightened about the young man's shoulders caressingly. Leonard broke down.

"These Hill people sneer at everything down there," he stammered. "She was the whitest—she was— Oh! *I* know what she was—and I couldn't save her. She cared, though. Labelle came between us with his crucifix and wafer, but before he shut me out she had looked at me—"

"Once I cared for some one who—went away. Yet not altogether away, I think."

"You think that? You've been through it and you think that?"

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*At Ephesus*

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"Yes."

"I wish I could."

They talked on for a while in that strain, telling each other what the two dead women had been like, groping at the obscurity which now hid them. At last, when Dr. Winthrop felt that the flicker of artificial strength was departing, he returned to the beginning of the conversation, knowing that this might be his last chance to argue that grave matter.

"Oscar, remember that you are not to give me morphia again."

"But why—why?"

"For two reasons. The first is that I've taken a notion I'd like to hold up my head, over there, among those who bore the worst and died sober. That reason is sufficient in itself. The other is also sufficient in itself. The going without it will be my share—and all that I'm capable of accomplishing—in this trouble."

"But if I have to think of your enduring all that while I'm away, it will use me up completely. It won't help."

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"Yes, it will. You will think, 'if he can do it, I can.'"

"It's not a habit. I swear, it's only during this crisis. I should hope I could stop without that."

"Very likely." Dr. Winthrop knew how unlikely it was. "But I shall do it in any case."

"But—do you want to make me worse than a murderer? You've no right to force me to accept such a sacrifice. Put yourself in my place."

"That's what I've been doing."

"I promise—Can't you believe my word?"

Leonard flung away to walk up and down the room, nervously twitching chairs out of his way, adjusting and readjusting trifles—muttering stormily:

"Look here. When I say I promise, I mean it."

"So do I," said Dr. Winthrop, calmly. "I promised while you were out. I tried to break it, too—" he looked at the spoiled hypodermic— "but it held."

"But if I were as lost as you think me, you

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*At Ephesus*

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know perfectly well that such a sacrifice wouldn't have the slightest influence."

"I don't think you lost. By and by—when you think it over—remember I thought it a very small price to pay—then you will be able to judge whether it was the only price."

"But you miss the point. What, if it is dangerous—so long as it's the only way to save those children? You'd do it yourself."

"I might. But I won't let you."

"Doctor, don't do it. I simply couldn't stand it to let you."

"My promise is given. Dying people have a right to obedience when their minds are clear. Mine is very clear."

"I won't let you. You wouldn't let a patient of yours do such a thing."

"Promise." Dr. Winthrop moved restlessly with returning pain.

At last, but not because his will had weakened, Dr. Leonard gave in. He yielded because of something strange, solemn, and majestic that entered the room and took possession of everything in it. It overtopped that great pain and made nothing of death.

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### *Interventions*

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It soothed and explained, but was not reducible to words. His own physical and mental distress slunk away ashamed. The gentle touch of snow on the window was as though dead fingers, growing impatient, were making signals there. The lamp went out, and he built the fire hot and bright, so that the room was full of wavering light and shadow.

Dr. Winthrop groaned heavily now and then. Once he said wistfully:

“Oscar, don’t you think that maybe—it might be to-night?”

And after some deliberation the young doctor was able to say with a good conscience:

“I think it is quite possible.”

With this possibility in mind he drew close to the great chair—and so, in the strong and cheerful fire-light, they spent the night.

“It’s not so bad,” Dr. Winthrop would sometimes say, his forehead clammy with the sweat of the struggle. “Nothing that I can’t endure.”

As the giant hours, called small, dragged on, Dr. Leonard became aware that his

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*At Ephesus*

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youth had departed from him forever. But something better had replaced it—something so much better that there could be no reasonable regret for whatever of brightness had made way.

When solemn and important events are happening, one often perceives a persistent murmur in one's brain of Bible texts or fragments of great poems—large, simple phrases—*Leitmotive* out of the vague orchestra of things.

“Yea, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death”—thus one triumphant voice—“I shall fear no evil”—and passed like military music.

Another voice was more inclined to argument—perhaps it was even a little querulous.

“If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me if the dead rise not?”

“That's bargaining,” mused the doctor. “One can't do that. Irrespective, though, of the dead and their rising, perhaps there's advantage in just having fought at Ephesus with beasts, and knowing one has done his

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*Interventions*

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best at it." He looked long at the dying face moving restlessly on the pillow, but instead of dissolving in the weak agony of pity and remorse which had but now overwhelmed him, he was conscious of an influx of courage and of an undefined hope. Here was no squalor and despair. Instead it was invigorating and fine, like the clean air of mountains and oceans.









**This book is under no circumstances to be  
taken from the Building**

[illegible]



